NUFS Workshop 2014

Newsletter No. 3

<u>Workshop in July</u>

\<Part 1 \>

Date: July 12, 2014, 10:30-14:00
Venue: NSC College, Building Minami, Room A-31
Presenter: Nancy Mutoh（Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)
Title: "How to Make an Assessment Plan That Motivates
　　　Students and Improves Learning"

**Abstract**: By the time term-end test scores are known, it is too late to re-teach what was not learned. Consequently, many students begin each new term feeling unsuccessful in English and demotivated about trying to catch up. In this workshop, you will learn how to create a comprehensive assessment plan for a unit in your textbook - a plan that matches test tasks to course goals and weekly learning activities to test tasks. From such an assessment plan, you gain timely understanding of students' learning needs. By modifying your teaching accordingly, you can help your students learn more successfully and become more motivated. Please be sure to bring your textbook to the workshop!
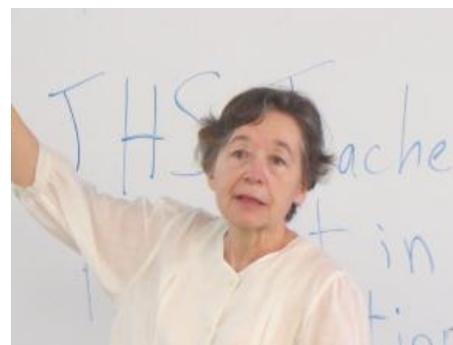
The number of participants: 33

1. Results of the Survey

### (1) I attend the workshop _____.
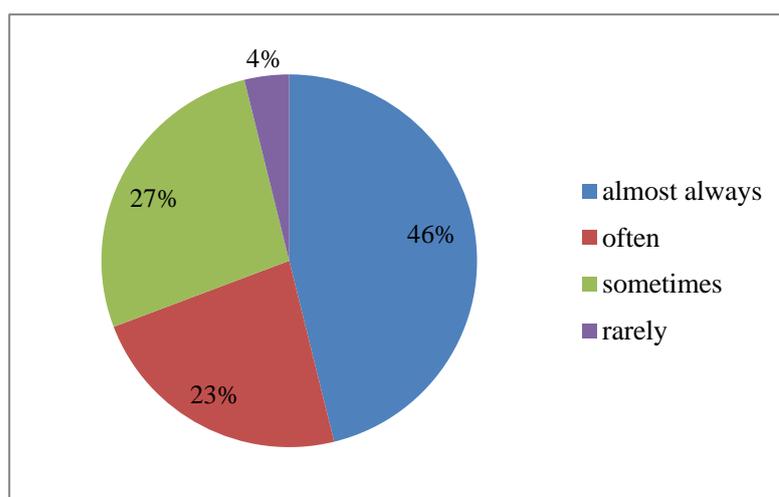
**(2) Please mark the reason or reasons that cause you to miss workshops.**
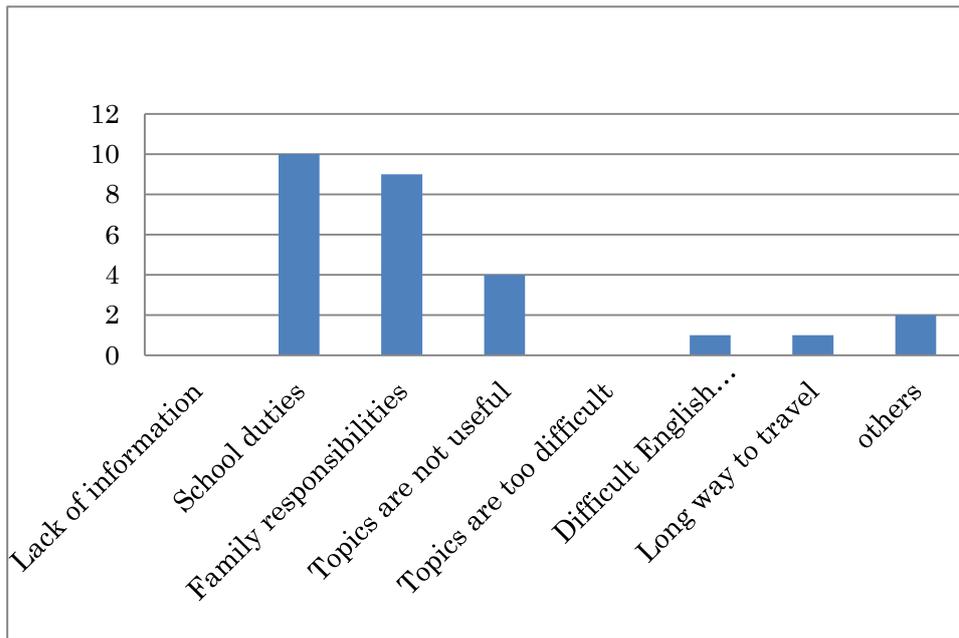
(3) I (am / am not) a native speaker of English.
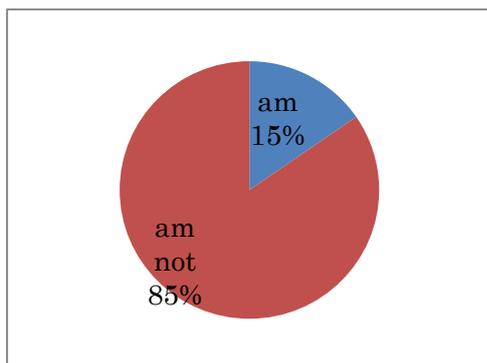
(4) I could understand about _____ of the presenter's English today.
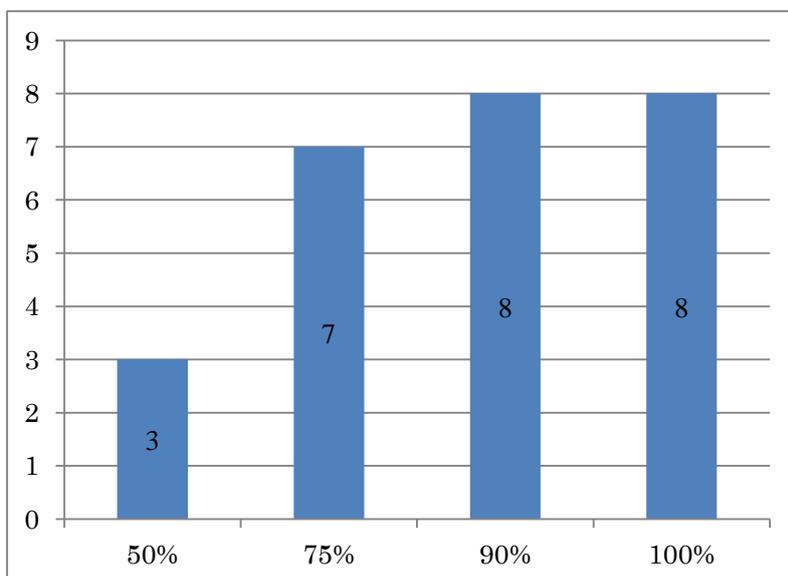
(5) I was already familiar with about _____ of the ideas and information in today's presentation.
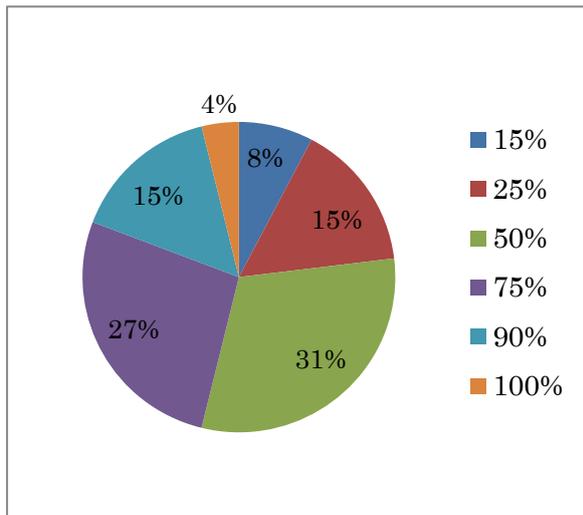
(6) Do you currently use these assessment activities?
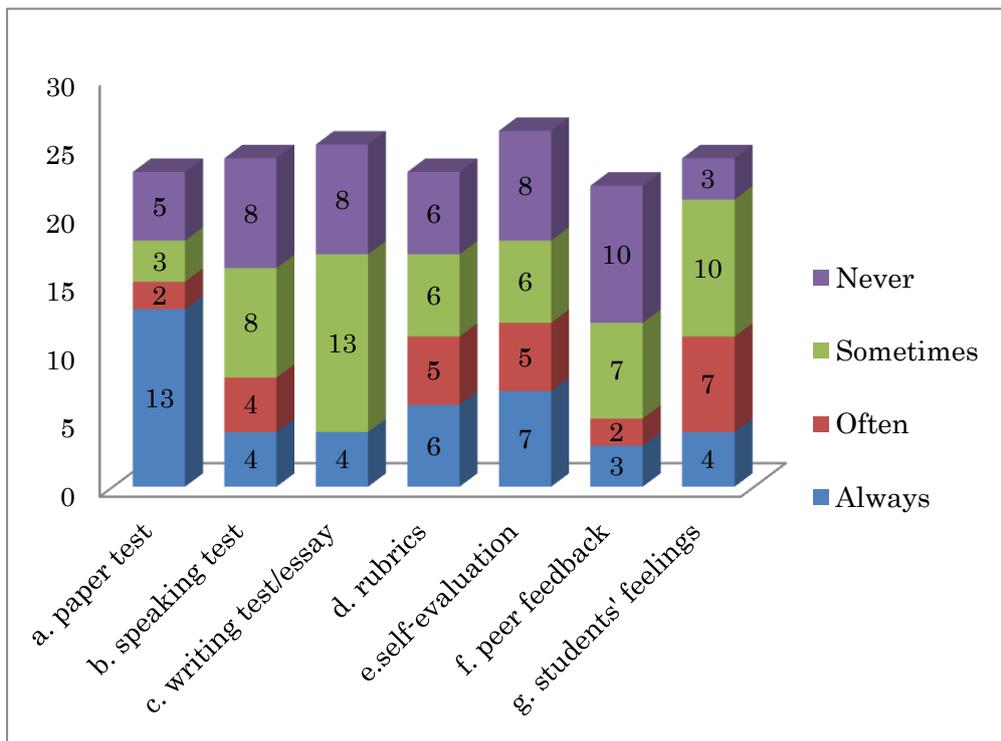
(7) Will you use these assessment activities from now on?
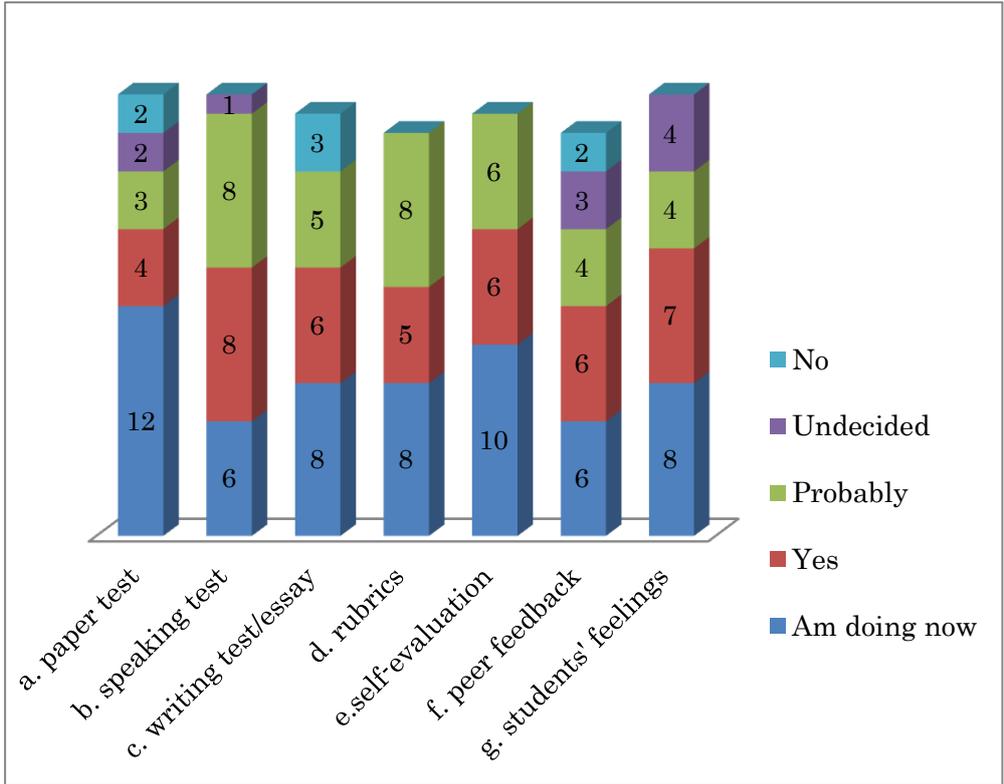
(8) Please show your opinion about each statement.

(a) I learned a lot from my group members today.

(b) I learned a lot from the written materials.

(c) I learned a lot from the presenter.

(d) I understand how to assess my students' learning better now than before today's workshop.

(e) Making a comprehensive assessment plan for one unit in my textbook was useful.
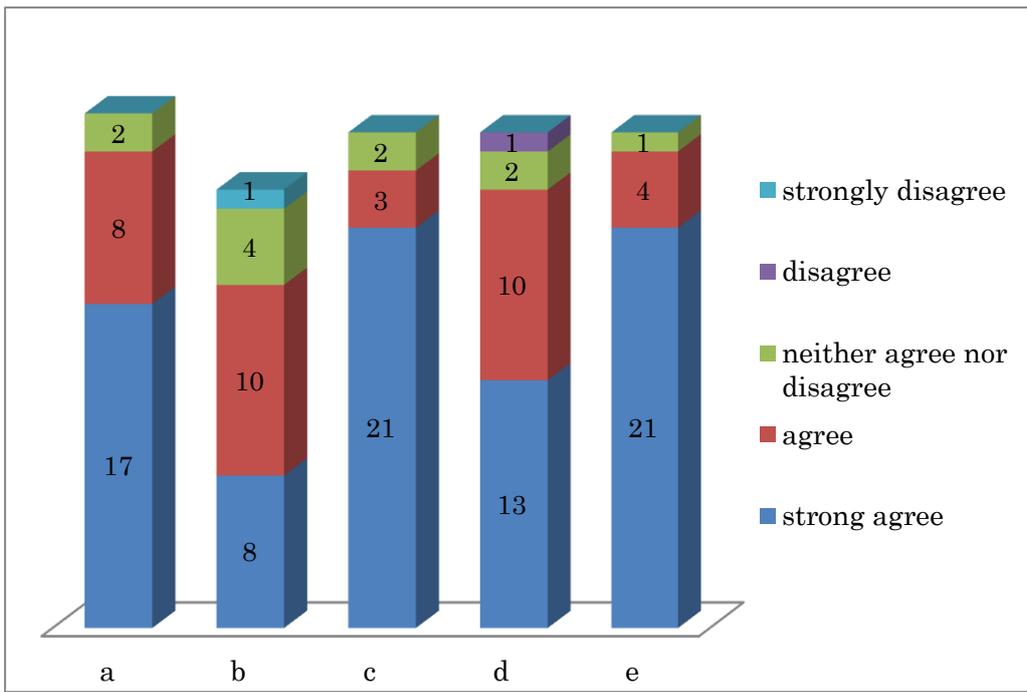
(9) What two or three things from today's workshop were most useful and valuable for you to learn?

- Planning a unit starting with the final assessment made lesson planning easier. It showed me the lesson not only in my perspective but the students' perspective as well.

- Using the same textbook over and over tend to fall into a habit, however, checking the textbook unit on the introduced point make me start looking at the thing in fresh eyes.

- Wash back effect – we have to make assessment appropriate for achieving the goal. Tests (assessment) and the way of teaching are much related. We have to think the balance between paper test and activity.

- Assessment should be helpful for students and should motivate students more. We have to make use of assessment in order for students to study better. I think assessment criteria and rubrics are very complicated for students to understand, so they should be more simple and understandable for students.

- I've learned a lot today. I should think about validity, reliability, authenticity, and practicality for paper and speaking test.

- I learned the word 'wash back effects' form today's workshop. The way we evaluate students decides how they study from our classes. We should think the evaluation system more deeply and start thinking for better use for both teachers and for students.

- Teacher collaboration makes planning easy and productive.

(10) Questions you have about the content of today's workshop

1) Please give more information about making rubrics.

Borrow rather than make!

Making rubrics that are clear in meaning and easy to use is much more difficult that it appears. Whenever possible, use a rubric that has already proven to be useful for other teachers. You can modify a borrowed rubric to make it fit your needs better. You looked at the new series of books on assessing language performance 「英語授業を変えるパフォーマンス・テスト」佐藤一嘉編者 明治図書 （2014）at the workshop. These are full of many types of useful, classroom-tested rubrics for assessing speaking and writing. The fastest, most successful way to start performance testing is to get the book for your teaching level and use those rubrics: 中学校　１、２、３　and　高校. Doing so will get you and your students off to a better start.

Parts of a rubric

A rubric is usually made using a table (表). There are various formats for rubrics. One format is to list the *criteria* you use to assess the speaking or writing in the left column with the *degrees of success* in each criterion listed across the top line (often stated in points or as A, B, C. The remaining squares usually contain *descriptors*, short phrases that help assessors decide whether to give, for example, 2 or 3 points for a particular criterion. A different kind of rubric can be found at http://www.pearsonlongman.com/ae/worldview/wvvideospeakingrubric.pdf

This is a *proficiency bands* type of rubric. It doesn't allow the assessor to score different criteria separately, so it is less useful for feedback and ongoing learning. This kind of rubric is most suitable for standardized proficiency testing and placement decisions.

The following rubric is included in <u>Sato, K., & Takahashi, K. (2008).</u>
(http://www3.nufs.ac.jp/~yoshi/paper/Sato%20&%20Takahashi%20%282008%29.doc). It has been
used (with and without modification) by many teachers.

Table 10: Rubric for the speaking test – 20 points in total (July 2004)

Fluency	8 points	· asking questions (2, 1, 0)
		· response rate (2, 1, 0)
		· answer in more than two sentences (2, 1, 0)
		· maintain two-minute conversation (2, 1, 0)
Accuracy	2 points	· grammar (1, 0)
		· pronunciation (1, 0)
Delivery	4 points	· volume (2, 1, 0)
		· spontaneity (not memorization) (2, 1, 0)
Strategies	4 points	· How ya doing? (1, 0)
		· Nice talking with you. (1, 0)
		· Shadowing (1, 0)
		· How about you? (1, 0)
Impression	2 points	· Impressive (2, 1, 0)

Table 11: Modified version of the rubric for the speaking test – 20 points (December 2004)

Fluency & Content	10 points	(10) be able to maintain 3 minute-conversation fluently, with good content
		(7) be able to maintain a 3 minute-conversation with some silence, with adequate content
		(4) be able to maintain a 3 minute-conversation with some silence, with poor content
		(1) be hardly able to maintain a 3 minute-conversation with some long silences
Accuracy (grammar & pronunciation)	3 points	(3) be able to communicate with accuracy
		(2) be able to communicate with some errors
		(1) communicate with many errors, using mainly key words
Delivery (volume & eye contact)	3 points	(3) be able to speak with good volume and eye contact
		(2) occasionally speak with adequate volume and eye contact
		(1) be hardly able to speak with adequate volume and eye contact
Strategies (conversation strategies & follow-up questions)	4 points	(4) be able to use many conversation strategies and follow-up questions
		(3) be able to use some conversation strategies and follow-up questions
		(2) use a few conversation strategies and follow-up questions
		(1) be hardly able to use conversation strategies and follow-up questions

2) What are the best ways to evaluate young learners?

Assessment goals and principles are the same for young learners as for older learners: we aim for a balance of as-good-as-possible validity, reliability, authenticity and practicality. Also important is to follow the principle that learning tasks and assessing tasks should be the same kind of tasks, so that the test feels "familiar" to students and they can show what they have learned.

Young learners who don't yet read English, or maybe even Japanese, need picture cues of course instead of printed words. They can be expected to understand the spoken words and phrases they have learned and be able to use them in ways they have used them in class. To show comprehension they can also use physical gestures and movements, as well as doing physical tasks such as arranging small pictures in order or arranging toy figures to match a story they are listening to, for example.

3) I couldn't understand well about why the target vocabulary parts are divided into 3?

The purpose of the three categories is to remind us that not all words are equally worth learning. We need to prioritize vocabulary according to its usefulness. In SHS, especially, textbooks often have long vocabulary lists, which contain both words that are used in a wide range of situations and other words that are not so commonly used.

High frequency general infrastructure vocabulary:
These are the basic words of the language that are not limited to one topic and that occur in many kinds of situations. These are high priority for learning. There are many phrases in this category, too. Some examples are: understand, accept, need, , occur, , wait, ride, agree/disagree, improve, number, place, name, person, purpose, sign (as in: stop sign or Please sign your name on this line.), accident, project, abroad, absent, forever, actually, absolutely, accustomed to, sensible, go straight ahead, go ahead/after you, heavy rain, in general, the day before yesterday, in a minute, I'm not sure whether…, half way up, on the other hand.

High frequency general topic vocabulary:
Most textbook units are based on a topic. Some of the vocabulary related to the topic is used more generally, while some vocabulary is technical or used mostly just for that topic. If the topic is, for example, the story of Ryan's Well (http://www.ryanswell.ca/projects/projects.aspx), vocabulary worth teaching at the high school level would include: lack/lack of, preventable diseases, reduce the spread of (disease), well (noun), donate money, etc.
More technical words, such as *bore* (a well) or words that can be easily replaced by more a more frequent word - such as *latrine* which can be replaced by *toilet* -
are low priority when time is short.

Student-specific vocabulary, based on their personalized topics
If the text lesson is about Ryan's Well, the teacher could ask students to find a worthwhile project in their own area, Prefecture or on the internet that interests them, collect information about it, and teach partners about that project. Here, too, students should be told to use easy words to explain their personalized topic. If they don't, partners won't understand at all.

4) Some schools demand students to do memorization test in class. Is it good or bad to lead learners to be communicative? If it is good, what kind of theory to explain its effectiveness?

Learning a foreign language does require memorization (of vocabulary, irregular verbs, etc.), but it requires more than just memorization. If the memorized information isn't used for communication (exchanging real information, ideas, feelings) it will be forgotten without ever developing into *language ability*. In other words, if we don't give learners regular opportunities to communicate in English, having them memorize grammar structures and vocabulary is useless. Communicating is what languages are for and it is the goal that MEXT requires that we lead students to reach.

I think you are referring to the approach to language teaching called Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Because so few teachers in Japan use this approach, there has not been a lot of published evidence for its effectiveness. However, please read Sato, K., & Takahashi, K. (2008). (http://www3.nufs.ac.jp/~yoshi/paper/Sato%20&%20Takahashi%20%282008%29.doc) Curriculum revitalization in a Japanese high school through teacher collaboration. In D. Hayes & J. Sharkey (Eds.), *Revitalizing a program for school-age learners through curricular innovation* (pp. 205-237)(TESOL curriculum development series: Volume 4). Alexandria, VA: TESOL, Inc. You can download the article by pushing Control and clicking on the authors' names. That links to Yoshi Sato's homepage (http://www3.nufs.ac.jp/~yoshi/index.html), the Published Papers section. This longitudinal study of a whole high school found that when the teachers cooperated in using a communicative approach to teaching English, students because able to use English for real communication in all four skills.

5) **We talked about communicative assessment but it was largely summative assessment. I would like to hear about assessment methods other than tests and how to incorporate them into classes on a daily basis. I am also interested in formative assessment.**

Formative, or ongoing, assessment can be grouped into three types, I find.
One type is visible: the explicit "short test" (quiz) type of assessment that is common, the teacher walking around looking at students' work as they do it, teacher feedback on student writing or worksheets, etc.

The second type is assessment that is woven into learning activities.

 (a) One example of this second type of assessment is in the teaching of grammar. With "focus on form instruction" (also called "structured input" of grammar), a student's success in doing the "intake task" shows to what extent the student has *understood* the meaning of the new target grammar point; while success in the output task shows to how well the student has understood the *form and use* of the grammar point.

For information about this way of teaching grammar, please see the books containing grammar lessons written by teachers of JHS 1, 2, and 3 and SHS, フォーカス・オン・フォームでできる！英文法指導アイディアワーク edited by Sato, K. and published by 明治図書, 2012. Also click on the two links below to see published journal articles about this approach:

Sato, K., Fukumoto, Y., Ishitobi, N., & Morioka, T. (2012). Focus-on-form instruction and student learning in Japanese junior high schools. In A. Stewart & N. Sonda (Eds.), JALT2011 Conference Proceedings (pp.283-303). Tokyo: JALT.

And, about high school grammar teaching: (Please remove the space between these two lines.)

Sato, K., Iwai, R., Kato, M., & Kushiro, M. (2009). Focus-on form instruction (FFI) and its effect on student learning. In A. M. Stoke (Ed.), *JALT2008 Conference Proceedings* (pp. 521-548).   Tokyo: JALT.

(b) Another example is assessment that is part of an integrated-skills, information-exchange chain activity. Partners have a conversation asking and answering questions about, say, sports they like (sports they play, how often they play, sports they like to watch, how often they watch, and their favorite team). As they chat, they write very brief notes (one- or two-word answers) in an information table that has space for the student's own answers and those of each partner spoken with (often 3 partners). Students can then be asked to verbally report the information they collected to a small group of different students or write the information in a paragraph. By successfully doing this chain activity, students generate visible evidence of their ability to use the target language in a real conversation. Target grammar and previously-learned grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, etc. can be assessed at once. The purpose isn't to collect gradable data, but to learn what follow-up review or teaching is needed for which students. Teachers have always done this, but integrated skills activities provide natural, fruitful opportunities at the same time that students are getting good communication practice.

Here is a typical information table format.

Collect the answers of three classmates. Then share your answers with other classmates.

	You	Name	Name	Name
1. What sport do you play/do?				
2. How often do you play/do it?				
3. What sport do you like to watch?				
4. How often do you watch it?				
5. What team is your favorite?				

The third type is assessment that is conducted by students. Students learn important things from these types of assessment.

(a) Peer-assessment is often used in writing. Each student gives their partner their feelings as a *reader* of the text (not as an editor). Peer assessors write a star beside sentences that have especially interesting content or are especially well-written, a question mark beside places that are difficult to understand and the word "more" beside places where the peer-reader would like more detail or an example. Then the peer assessor writes one positive comment about the text. Many teachers have students exchange papers with three classmates. This amount of feedback is good stimulus for writers as they prepare to write their second draft, and is especially helpful for expanding the content of their

text. It also causes readers to read more thoughtfully and to think about what good writing is.

(b) Self-evaluation of a student's own conversation or writing. These are very simple, requiring only 2 or 3 minutes. By doing these regular self-evaluations, students learn the qualities of good speaking and writing because the qualities to be self-assessed are listed by the teacher. They also track their own development and set goals for improving specific aspects of their speaking or writing. Here is a sample self-assessment format.

評価項目		自己評価			今回の会話の感想・気が付いたこと・分かったこと:
Eye contact	アイ・コンタクト	A	B	C	
Voice	適当な声の大きさ	A	B	C	
Used CSs	ＣＳの利用	A	B	C	
Smoothness	スラスラ話せた	A	B	C	

6) How does the difficulty of the paper test affect students' motivation? Will difficult tests make students study harder in the next term? Which is better: giving a difficult test so students will do their best for the next term, or giving a test suitable to their level but students will feel they don't have to study and exert effort?

Most people, in my experience, feel discouraged by bad results, and if their results are often or usually bad, they naturally become demotivated and conclude there is no point in trying. Success feels good and makes most people want to maintain their successful record.

A better way to motivate students than adjusting the difficulty level of tests is to let them feel the thrill of communicating their real information, opinions and feelings in English and learning about their classmates' information, opinions and feelings about various things. The teacher creates many small learning steps that most all of the students can succeed in. Over time, the effect of many small steps is a visible big step in ability to speak and write English. During one term and one year, students discover that using English to communicate is as fun as communicating in Japanese, and is also pretty "かっこいい". Students doing such activities are generally smiling and very engaged. This discovery motivates them to want to know more vocabulary and to use grammar more correctly in order to use their English more skillfully.

Another thing to consider is the textbook. Paper tests are generally based on the textbook, so it has a significant impact on motivation. If the chosen textbook assumes a higher level of English than many students have, the students will find the textbook discouragingly difficult from the start. The weakest students have the biggest hurdle to jump. More motivating is a textbook with high-interest content (from students' points of view) and at a level that they can handle well with a reasonable amount of effort.

7) It is not easy for me to make a test which can assess students' reading ability. If you could give me any suggestions, I would be very grateful. (I am teaching at a high school now.)

I agree with you that writing good tests is not easy!

"Reading" to most people means to get the meaning from a written text. When you choose a text for a reading test, therefore, it needs to be one that the students haven't seen before and that is close enough to their current level of vocabulary and English structure that they have a fair chance of understanding it with reasonable reading skills. (Using the passage from the textbook is a test of memory, not a reading test.) The test passage needs to be short enough that students have enough time to read it needs enough content to base questions on.   Some points to keep in mind:

(a) Avoid questions based on one sentence in the text because they can often be correctly answered without understanding the meaning of the sentence. They can often be answered by using general knowledge of English grammar. This is especially so when both the question and answers are also in English. I have found that many textbook comprehension questions have this problem.

Please take this reading test on a short excerpt from Jabberwocky (in *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* by Lewis Carroll, 1872).

Instructions: Read the four-line text below and answer the three questions.

`Twas brillig, and the slithy toves

Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:

All mimsy were the borogoves,

And the mome raths outgrabe.

Questions

1.   What did the slithy troves do?

2.   How were the borogoves?

3.   What did the mome raths do?

The correct answers to the test are at the end of this reply to 7).

(b) Better questions are based on understanding two or more places in the text. Questions like:

~Why did Toby want to go the city?

~What did he learn from his week there?

~How did Toby feel after that experience?

~What is the main idea of this passage?

(These draft questions and the intended correct answers need checking by colleagues because the first draft of such a questions often has two possible answers if multiple choice.)

(c) The choice of using Japanese or English or a mix in the questions and answers needs thought.

  Things to consider: Straight translation questions about particular words, phrases or a sentence don't show whether a student has understood the text as a whole. Multiple choice questions in English let students scan the text for words in the question. Open-ended questions that ask students to answer in Japanese allow them to more clearly communicate their understanding to the teacher. A reading test score shouldn't depend on English writing ability. For the same reason, if answers to reading test questions are written in English, points should not be deducted for English language mistakes in the answers.

  (Answers to the reading test: 1. They gyred and gimbled. 2. They were mimsy. 3. They outgrabe.
The words are nonsense words, so we can't get any meaning from this text. However, all of the teachers and students who have taken this text scored 100%.)

8) What's the most important thing to change the situation in testing from now on? Maybe talking with our colleagues about this…

Yes, that's it! Within one school, colleagues can significantly improve students' learning by

1) being clear about, and agreeing on, the goals of their overall English program and each course in the three years, and

2) planning types of term-end assessment (performance tests and sections of the paper test) that match the goals, then

3) planning the curriculum for each course so that students are lead, step by step, to succeed in the ongoing (formative) assessment tasks and the final assessment tasks, and finally

4) assess your own program by examining results of final assessment, student surveys, reflections of teachers, etc. to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the program and make a plan to improve it.

For blueprints and inspiration, please see Sato and Takahashi (2008), cited in question 4 above and

Sato, K. and Hirano, M. (2013). School-wide Collaborative Action Research for Curriculum Development. *JALT Proceedings (in press, due out August 2014).*

\<Part 2\>

Date: July 12, 2014, 14:30-17:00
Venue: NSC College
Advisors: Kazuyoshi Sato, Nancy Mutoh (NUFS), Robert Croker (Nanzan University)
Abstract: Monthly report on action research
The number of participants: 18

Workshop in August (Scheduled)

August workshop is for TESOL students/non-degree students and AR group members only.
Date: August 2-3, 2014,
Venue: Green Hotel Sangane
Advisors: Kazuyoshi Sato, Nancy Mutoh (NUFS), Robert Croker (Nanzan University)
Abstract: Mid-term presentation on action research

Please send an email to Chihaya (chiha143@nufs.ac.jp) if you have any questions.