

Newsletter No. 2

Workshop in June

“Fostering Student-Asking For Better Learning & Teaching In & Out of Class!”

Presenter: Tim Murphey (Kanda University of International Studies)

Date: June 8, 2019, 10:30-14:30

Venue: Nagoya NSC College, Room A-31

Abstract: Teaching students to “Dare to ask!” may be one of the most productive learning strategies they will ever learn. I will share a wide range of activities you could use in your classes at all levels to teach and stimulate students to ASK more and actually learn to enjoy asking. You could also share these ways with other teachers who may be lecturing too long in their own classes. Asking students to participate more in running the classroom, choosing the activities, creating data, and organizing themselves (through asking) provides them with more agency and teachers with more efficacy.



The number of participants: 33

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

- Sing songs with 'kaeuta'. I can introduce them with my students with fun.
- The pair work counting game is an activity my students would love, so I will try it in my own lessons soon – possibly after showing the video of the 'babbling babies' proto-conversation.
- Songs – to sing is difficult for me in the class, but the words of today's songs were very good. Especially 'How do you change the world' is my favorite. To repeat good words many times by singing will be a better way to study English.
- Through 1-50, students can figure out how to express feelings without language, and they appreciate the usefulness of English.
- I want students to try 'one-word conversation'. This activity will make students excited and enjoy the class.
- Reticient Speaker Answers – Keep asking questions is a little difficult, but to break the ice, it's good to find questions to the person whom we want to communicate.
- Social testing: Nice way to have a good learning community.



2. What you learned from today's workshop

- Asking – you can ask any small topic at the beginning of conversation, then, we start thinking.
- I sincerely appreciate Prof. Mrrphey's brief book reviews because I know what hinder people from asking questions and what teachers can do/try to do.
- Simple activities make students relaxed and join them positively. 'Asking' is very important for students to broaden their world.
- 'Two babies talking' video clip will enable students to imagine what they are talking about. That can be used for broadening their idea.
- I won't forget the incisive phrase 'asking is a moment's embarrassment, not asking is a lifetime's regret.' So true!
- Asking leads people to think deeply, so I want to ask my students many questions and also make an atmosphere where students feel relaxed and ask questions.



3. Questions and Answers

Q (1): *You showed us lots of interesting activities today, and most of them are for teachers or university students. How can we modify them for junior/ senior high school students? Give me some examples.*

A: a) The counting activity 1-50. Simply make it 1 to 15 for JHS kids or less. And explain you start off as friends and between 5 and 10 you have an argument. Then between 11 and 15 you become friends again. Etc.

b) Mention conversations should be very easy with kids of all ages. The article is

Murphey, T. (1994). Mentions in action: Few word sentences, O.K.! *TESL Reporter* 27(1) 21-26.

The link is https://www.academia.edu/2872974/Mentions_in_Action_Few_Word_Sentences_OK

c) The video of the TALKING TWINNS should be interesting for all ages to guess at what they are saying.

d) Exit slips bilingually done – they try to write in English. If you list the activities on the board it is easier. See below

Q (2): *How can I think I can be free from "be in a box"? I try to think freely in a creative way, but it is not easy to do so.*

A: We all live in boxes somewhat. I find doing things I don't normally do helps me get out of the boxes. Collaborating with a new person, different age, different gender, different nationality, etc. Go have a meeting in a café instead of in a classroom. Start a new project. Think small always at first, they may become big, but start small or you won't start at all.



Q (3): In short, what can teachers do to make students ask questions each other?

A: If you asked my students “What is Tim’s most frequent phrase?” they would tell you he says “Ask your partner nani nani...” at least 10 to 20 times every class, e.g. with the 13 questions on page 5 of your handout, the 13 songlets call and response. After I teach one, I ask them to ask each other, as I did with you. To review things we did in previous classes I ask them to ask their partners many things about what we did and learned together. When you start your classes if you have them paired up they can ask about each other, what they did yesterday or the weekend, what are you going to do next weekend, etc. Ask them to ask their partners what they think they will learn today. ALSO ask them for feedback on the different sections of the class.

Try EXIT SLIPS – they all write on a piece of paper what they thought of the class that day, what did they like, what was so so, what did they not like or not understand.

EXTRA

Talking Twins link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmA2CIUvUY>

Please go to this page, good for graduate students. <http://gradlogic.org>
<http://gradlogic.org/pluralistic-ignorance/>

A classic scenario is a lecture hall, with a professor giving a complicated and incomprehensible lecture. After a pause, the lecturer asks if there are any questions. No hands go up. You look around and think to yourself: “Everyone else understands this. I must be *really* stupid.” Your fear of embarrassing yourself prevents you from raising your hand, but you are certain that you are the only one who is acting that way. Everyone else, you presume, keeps their hands down because they understand the material.”

NOTE FROM TIM – I really enjoyed talking with you on Saturday June 8. By the way,



How do you change the world?

Cheers

Workshop in June (AR Discussion)

Date: June 8, 2019, 9:00-12:00

Venue: Nagoya NSC College, Room A-52, A-62

Title: Group discussion on action research

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

The number of participants: 13



Provoking Potentials: Student Self Evaluated and Socially Mediated Testing

Tim Murphey, Kanda University of International Studies,

Due to be published in Rick Reis's Tomorrow's Professor Web site Stanford University #1581 end of June 2017 <<https://tomprof.stanford.edu/mail/1562#>>

Excerpt slight editing from

Murphey, T. (2017). Provoking Potentials: Student Self Evaluated and Socially Mediated Testing. In R. Al-Mahrooqi, et al. (eds.), *Revisiting EFL Assessment: Critical Perspectives* New York: Springer. BK CHAPTER pp. 287- 317.

Abstract: This exploratory action research (Smith 2015) describes a new conception of testing in which students are directed to evaluate themselves (give themselves grades) at two moments in time: the first after a certain amount of time filling in answers that they can recall alone; and the second after asking others in the class for mediating help during a socially interactive time period. The first grade represents their own individual efforts, without their connections in the class. The second grade represents a situated person in a community with their connections in the class. Enacting self evaluations and particularly the second stage of social testing seems to provoke potentials for expansive learning that may not normally emerge in traditional testing: potentials for self-appropriation of self-evaluation, agency, helpfulness, altruism, social learning, social construction, and the pedagogical learning of scaffolding. I do not propose that these tests are valid for assessing each individual's competence (not that I believe many others are), but that these exploratory procedures enlighten students to different aspects of learning and evaluation, and teach to different aspects of classroom dynamics and learning potentials. I see these tests as a generative way of continuing student learning. While I do propose a way to test such tests more rigorously following conventional assessment guidelines, I am more concerned here with the expansive learning potentials provoked by the procedure and the parallels that seem to exist with dynamic assessment and socio-cultural theory, particularly the use of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and the zone of proximal adjustment (ZPA). This social testing attempts to blend learning and assessment, which is an essential trait of dynamic assessment, and to blend theory with practice in praxis as described by Lantolf & Poehner (2014).

Why Social Testing: Going back in time

Cozolino (2013) in his volume on *The Social Neuroscience of Education* proposes that a class should feel like a tribe, with everyone feeling like they belong. Without this feeling of belonging and attachment we spend much of our neurological energy asking ourselves who we are and defending ourselves from social exclusion. He also invites us to recognize that brains and neurons do not exist alone and isolated in the natural world.

Similarly, Lieberman's (2013) volume, entitled *Social: Why our brains are wired to connect*, brings attention to three main adaptations: first, that being well adjusted socially is as crucial to our well-being as food and water. He notes that the social pain of losing a loved one or breaking up or being an outcaste creates real physical pain directed by the same systems in the brain that tell us about physical pain. Secondly, we are a mind-reading species with mentalizing systems which are built to figure out what other's are thinking. And finally, that our socially malleable selves often lead us to altruism (something we will see in the testing reactions below).

These neuroscience books came a decade after David Block's *The Social Turn in Second Language Acquisition* (2003) that highlighted the research in the field that supported the idea that we learn languages more easily the more we socially interact with each other. There has since been an even greater emphasis on the social turn in SLA (cf: Atkinson, 2011; Ortega, 2009).

Robin Dunbar (1998) claimed that the main reason we had big new brain parts, the neocortex, was so that we could live in larger groups and be more actively social. This "sociality" led us to actually develop more intelligence. It seems that other species might have been more intelligent in the beginning, but it was our ability to be social that made us smarter and allowed us to survive longer in larger groups. Thus, it was "better to be social than smart" in the beginning. In other words, at first our brains got excited about social interaction, and that allowed us to improve

our lives and our brains. The fact that Facebook is the most commonly visited website in the world (with over one billion accounts) also attests to our continual deep desire to connect and be social (Lieberman 2013, p. 32; Bower, 2013), far beyond our mere desire for more information.

Vygotskian Socio- Cultural Theory and Dynamic Assessment

Going back even further in history, Vygotsky wrote (circa 1930) that the teacher “has to become the director of the social environment, which, moreover, is the only educational factor” (1997, p. 339, cited in Lantolf and Poehner, 2014, p. 208). While a great part of our SLA educational endeavors are turning toward the social understandings of learning, belonging, and creating, testing has been left mostly undeveloped in the shadows, except for the a small SCT group of dynamic assessment researchers, inspired mostly by Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (ZPD) and Feuersteins’s mediated learning experience (MLE) led by Lantolf and Poehner (2004; 2011a, 2011b; 2014), along with those who have proposed a “critical testing” movement (Pennycook, 1994; Kramsch, 1993; Shohamy, 2001).

Thus, I propose in this chapter, placing myself at the nexus of praxis where theory meets practice, that individual conventional tests are problematic as they attempt to measure a single person’s abilities away from one’s social networks which one naturally uses to solve problems in the real world. I think we need a deeper social turn in SLA as a whole, and in the testing field in particular, a “turn” that I think is being spurred by social neuroscientists and SCT dynamic assessment researchers.

Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman (2011) introduce the problem well in saying, “We tend to take the use of tests for granted. However, underlying their use is a set of assumptions about the knowledge and abilities being tested that are different from those of SCT [socio-cultural theory]. For example, in general, we think of tests as something that must be done alone. It is considered cheating to ask a peer for help, to use a dictionary, or to search the Internet. Why?” (p. 118). Thus, our basic assumptions lead us down a path that ignores our sociality.

I contend that every person has a zone of proximal adjustment (ZPA) as well as a zone of proximal development (ZPD). In other words, each person has a set of abilities to adjust well (ZPA), or not, to others that allow us to help them to certain degrees, and each person also has abilities to show others how they might adjust to us (Murphey 1990, 1996, 2013a). I contend that learners can change experts as much as experts can change learners and that we are unknowingly often meditational means for each other’s development.

So the best qualitative feedback for students is probably that which comes from peers who are near the same level and experiencing similar things and who are able to adjust to each other more qualitatively, and be near peer role models (Murphey & Arao, 2001; Murphey 2013a, Singh 2010). There is a small but growing field of peer tutoring and learning that is recognizing this effect (Gafney & Varma-Nelson, 2008). In the words of one of my students reflecting on the social testing: “Peers helped me. They knew many answers. I also helped them. I like this quiz, this does not make me feel isolated!”

Many years ago I asked students to make test questions and then later to actually evaluate their classmates oral skills in response to a set of questions (Murphey 1996). The last few years I have been experimenting with what I call “social testing” with the procedures described below. This social testing attempts to allow students to learn further even while they are being assessed, which is an essential trait of dynamic assessment.

Student Self Evaluated Social Testing Procedures

My procedures start with a conventional test that slowly turns into a social collaboration, a contrast that is sharply noticed and commented upon in student feedback. The following steps have developed over the last three years of experimenting with this procedure (with a total of six semesters of university EFL classes, involving students from all four years with 20 to 80 students in a class).

1. Students take a regular style test (usually a fill in the blank, short answer, entailing recalling and reflecting on information) and after an appropriate amount of time (e.g. 20-30 minutes), they stop.

2. Then I tell them to put away their pencils and erasers, and to take out a pen (blue for best contrast) and give themselves an estimated score at the bottom of the test, say 50 % or 70% or 86%.
3. Then I tell them they have 5 minutes (I usually lengthen it to 10 to 20 minutes depending on how active they are and how big the group is) to ask any of the questions to anyone in the room and to add to their answers or write down new answers on their tests. In order to make it as orally interactive as possible, I set a few more rules:
 - a) *"You are not allowed to look at anyone's paper or show your own paper to anyone."* If I see this happening, I put a mark on their papers to mark them down 20%. (Sometimes I need to explain that "copying" is not learning; whereas a dialogue can open ourselves up to an exchange of ideas and nuances.)
 - b) If I want them to interact with more people I tell them *"You can only ask one or two questions per person."*
 - c) If they want to erase an old answer, they simply ~~draw one line through it with the pen, like this.~~
 - d) When the time is over, they give themselves a second % score for the new state of the test and hopefully they have improved their tests a lot. The change to ink allows the teacher to see approximately how much was answered with the help of others and how much was answered alone. They usually become intensively interactive during this time. I circulate and remind them loudly not to look or show their tests to anyone and to simply ask and dictate to each other. Many report actually constructing answers together during this time.
4. After finishing the second part, I ask them to put in the second score and to write the *names of the people who helped them, the names of those they helped*, and to comment on *what they think of the test*. The bottom of my tests now look something like this

<u>1st score</u> /100%	<u>2nd score</u> /100%	<u>3rd score</u> _____
Who helped you?		
Who did you help?		
What do you think of this test?		

The third score above, is for the teacher after the test and could be used in a variety of ways. For a final score, the first two scores can be averaged or calculated with different weights. Often with my overly humble Japanese, I am raising the scores, but that may not always be the case.

Each time I do a test like this the students are in awe the first time. My explanation cannot capture the excitement you will see when you start the second part of the test.

Discussion: Provoking Potentials and Expansive Learning

The fact that we bring people together in groups to learn creates great potentials for social learning, however most teachers and schools do not treat students, nor classes, as active socially intelligent dynamic systems (SINDYS: Murphey, 2013c) which can learn from each other. Teachers often see the group as a threat to be controlled rather than a dynamic ever-changing mystery to be explored. And while we teach to the group, we evaluate the individual. Our present state of testing isolates students from what made us intelligent initially.

Asking people to evaluate themselves for a real test can engage them in a process much deeper than most young people usually engage in. Students tell me at first that they don't know how to evaluate themselves and are often at a loss. Forced to do so by the rubrics of the social test, they estimate and struggle with the same questions that teachers struggle with as well.

Conclusion

Social testing with student self evaluations can create better learning conditions and expansive learning. I do not expect it to replace our conventional tests any time soon, however I offer it as a potential for creating more learning and helping in our classrooms for those teachers who are more concerned with student learning than student testing. It also ties in nicely with how students

will most often work for the rest of their lives: they will not be taking conventional tests but most probably collaborating with others to create and improve products, services, and conditions for accomplishing essential tasks in the work force. Thus, exercising their communicating across what Cozolino (2013) calls the “social synapse” might be enriching their potentials in their future lives.

In the end, I may be developing students’ altruism rather than testing their English and developing their ability to learn more socially rather than testing an isolated brain unconnected to others. As one student commented: “I enjoyed the test, especially because I could help others with answers.” Actually a handful of students comment this way at the end of every test, saying that being able to help others, not their own test scores, was what made the test so exciting. Holistically, I see both of these outcomes as far more useful than simply learning or testing content. This is what might be called Value Added Learning (Murphey, 2013b), i.e. deep learning and development through the learning of more important things than typical content. Thus, learning to help others learn by helping them find the answers they need is a noble quest. Infusing testing with helping habits and socially networked learning might just create better communities for students to learn with.

It is about time we acknowledged that our minds are no longer, if ever they were, isolated, independent, and individual entities, but rather our minds and our brains are interconnected and networked, and work best with other minds in collaboration. Both the philosopher Bache (2008) and the neuroscientist Cozolino (2013) concur that living in social collective creativity seems to be our calling as a species.

2420 words

Link for the full chapter with references

https://www.academia.edu/31159069/Provoking_Potentials_Student_Self-Evaluated_and_Socially-Mediated_Testing

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