

Newsletter No. 5

Workshop in September

Date: September 13th, 2025 10:30-14:30

Venue: NUFS Meieki Campus (BIZrium Nagoya)

Title: " The Quest for Reliable and Valid Language Assessment: How to Assess Receptive and Productive Skills in English' "

Presenter: Merve Savasci (Sakarya University, Turkey)

Abstract:

Language assessment plays a crucial role in guiding instructional practices and fostering learning. Consequently, designing, developing, and administering reliable and valid assessments is essential. This workshop combines research-informed and practical approaches to equip English language teachers with core assessment principles, concepts of reliability and validity, an overview of language test types, and practical strategies for effectively evaluating both receptive (listening, reading) and productive (speaking, writing) skills in English. Participants will explore how to design assessment activities suited to various age groups and proficiency levels, address common pitfalls in test design and development, and engage in hands-on activities. By the end, teachers will attain practical strategies to create and administer assessments that enhance both teaching practices and learners' growth.



The number of participants: 31

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

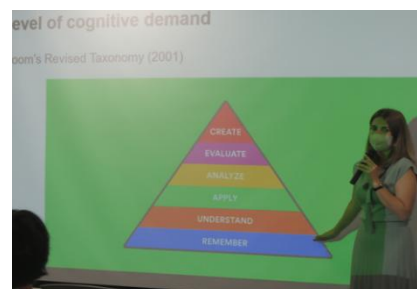
- I have learned different kinds of assessment. I would like to introduce some of them, but the problem is that the level of the students is very various and the gap between the top and the bottom is very wide.
- You have regenerated my interest in picture activities. I will be trying out some listening & speaking activities with pictures from this semester.



- Storytelling writing was an interesting method. I'm currently struggling with teaching writing. Giving students their first words is especially effective for beginner-level students. I'd like to try this method.
- Picture input for slow learners would be effective if they can just draw a line while listening.
- The use of pictorial, descriptive and narrative sample speaking tasks encourages students to actively participate and achieve specific language goals.

2. What you learned from today's workshop

- I could reconfirm that when we do assessment, we should be careful about if it is reliable and valid or not. And also, we should think about 'why, how and what would we assess them?'
- Listening doesn't equal watching. Don't test after listening, it's not a memory test.
- The Taxonomy Chart (2001) is extremely useful for teachers when creating tests. Measuring English proficiency is not easy. It is important for teachers to ensure reliability and validity when assessing students.
- I have learned the accurate assessment of the total comprehension. For that purpose I have to always keep in mind what should be expected to the students when I teach English. There is no royal way to teach and learn a foreign language, while living in our won country, in particular in Japan.
- Don't leave it up to the students' imagination, provide guidelines or standards for them to follow or utilize in their answers.



3. Questions and Answers

1) At junior/senior high school, teachers must grade students on three levels (A, B, C) based on three aspects (knowledge, thinking, attitude). How can we apply the principles of assessment to this rule?

Thank you for this excellent question! Indeed, what I discussed during the workshop was rather concerned with the “*knowledge*” aspect—knowledge of English. You can measure their knowledge in several different ways. As per the “*thinking*” aspect, Bloom’s revised taxonomy which provides a framework for learning objectives could be taken into consideration. That is, items in an assessment practice can be designed in a way that would promote students’ higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) (i.e., thinking). To exemplify, consider that you adopt Cinderella’s fairytale as a reading or listening activity in your test. The following are the items you might ask the students to measure their “thinking” as a part of your assessment (as either a speaking or writing task):

- What conclusions do you think we can draw from this story? (The promoted skill: *analyze*)



- Would you have liked to have had Cinderella for a sister? Explain why or why not. (The promoted skill: *evaluate*)
- Suggest another way to end this story. Can you predict the outcome if the prince had broken the glass shoe? (The promoted skill: *create*)

However, it is also worth noting that being able to provide responses to the items that promote HOTS require a certain level of proficiency. With lower proficiency students, you might consider simplifying the item as much as possible because their current proficiency would not probably allow them to produce satisfactory responses.

Apart from these two aspects, I am afraid I cannot think of any assessment practices targeted at “attitude”. Since I do not know the details of the junior/senior high school context in Japan, I cannot provide any suggestions for the time being. However, if you send me an e-mail explaining what is exactly meant by the “attitude” aspect, we can work on it together.



2) Is ‘grade’(seiseki) absolutely necessary?

Thank you for this question, and my answer is “it depends”. While grade (seiseki) is a part of assessment and has instructional and administrative reasons behind, it might not necessarily be a must all the time. I think so because grades could sometimes have detrimental effects on student motivation. Let me put it this way: If your aim—as a teacher—is to promote student motivation in a writing course, assigning a grade might not be the best idea, particularly during the process in which you try to ignite their motivation. However, we must also acknowledge the fact that it is a part of learning and teaching activities. Assigning a grade enables all the stakeholders a kind of “proof” of learning to a considerable extent. When students see a grade on their test, they can see what they are good at and what needs to be improved from their side. Teachers also can identify what has been learned or not as well as how much students have achieved. Indeed, all these show that that assessment is not one-size-fits-all, but can be adapted to depending on the context and aims.

3) It’s ironic that we are teachers, but we don’t get any or only get a little training on how to make tests. What should we do?

I cannot agree more! Thank you for raising this important issue. Around the world, many teachers unfortunately receive almost no or limited training in assessment despite using tests and evaluations daily, which they use to make critical decisions about students. This gap is recognized in research on *language assessment literacy (LAL)*. Considering this, teachers’ LAL can be developed in several different ways: One way is self-promoted professional development activities. For example, attending workshops, online training, and so on. Another way is to raise awareness regarding such a professional need in your institution and seeking professional development

opportunities within your institution. I am well aware that it is very challenging to develop yourself on your own in an area, but if we require support from our institutions, we can thrive in our jobs. What matters is not feeling discouraged and moving forward.

4) Integrating four skills is really effective to improve their English but we have to think about how to apply it into classrooms and assess them. Any suggestions?

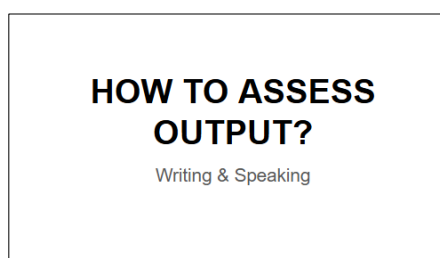
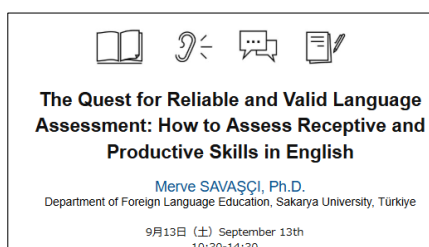
This is a really nice question, thank you. For the classroom environment, several activities could be designed where we integrate all four skills. For example, after listening to an audio track, students might be asked to discuss the ideas in a speaking activity. For higher-proficiency students, you can adapt it by having them listen to or read two opposite viewpoints and ask them to support one side by justifying their thoughts.

Overall, the point here is to provide them with language input through reading and listening, followed by writing or speaking activities as output-oriented activities. However, we do not necessarily have to integrate reading with writing (which is the case most of the time); instead, we can also integrate reading with speaking or listening with writing (instead of speaking). Overall, two or three, or all four skills can be integrated in several different ways.

While assessing the skills in an integrated way, we can likewise design the tasks in accordance with the above principles. Nevertheless, there are two critical issues: We should make sure 1) we practiced these integrated tasks in the classroom environment before the assessment practice (that is, students do not encounter such integrated tasks in the test for the first time), and 2) we design the rubric in a way which measures both skills. Indeed, we should decide whether we use input as a prompt or not. If we use it as a prompt to provide students with ideas and promote their thinking, we might just focus on assessing the output-oriented skill. For more examples, you can examine TOEFL IBT items on the website of ETS. I hope these could provide some food for thought.

As to the PP, I cannot attach it here since it exceeds the maximum limit (25 MB), yet you can download it through the following link:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1bNEP65Tu3VBA3j6TceqqfQyM5nRqL_NnimKyn4Gzods/edit?usp=share_link



AR Discussion

Date: September 13th, 2025, 14:30-17:00 (Room MW01, 02, 03)

Title: Action Research Discussion

Advisors: Sato Kazuyoshi, Duane Kindt, Kevin Ottoson (NUFS)

The number of participants: 11



Next workshop will be held on October 11th, 2025.

Detailed information is here:

<https://www.nufs.ac.jp/workshop/news/>

NUFS Workshop

Nagoya University of Foreign Studies

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Secretary: Chihaya Sugiura