

NUFS Workshop 2009*Newsletter No. 4**< Summer Workshop 2009 >***“Assessment for Learning”**

Date: August 3-5, 2009, 9:30-16:30

Venue: Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, Room 322

Goals

- * To learn a better approach to assessment
- * To experience various types of assessment firsthand
- * To develop new assessment activities for your students

Outline

The topic of the 2009 NUFs Summer Workshop is assessment - a powerful part of education that shapes how students learn and how teachers teach. Participants will learn about new approaches to assessment that have gained prominence in foreign language teaching in recent years. They will then work collaboratively to adapt new assessment techniques to their own classrooms.

Frequent and varied classroom assessment activities allow teachers to develop a detailed understanding of students' learning. This allows teachers to better adjust their teaching to students' learning needs. Such "[c]lassroom assessment has been shown to be one of the most powerful levers for enhancing student learning" (Earl, L., 2007, p. 87).

Presenters will explain assessment principles and demonstrate assessment techniques that workshop participants will experience as students. Participants will work in groups, applying their new understanding of assessment, to develop assessment activities based on their own teaching materials. Each group will present its results on the last afternoon.

All lectures, hands-on activities, group work and presentations by participants are conducted in English. Participants improve and practice their English while learning new ways of assessing their students' learning. Participants always comment that they learn much from each other in the Workshop, as they share their ideas, activities and teaching experiences.

<Day 1>

Date: August 3, 2009, 9:30a.m.-12:30a.m., 13:30p.m. - 16:30p.m.

Instructor: Kazuyoshi Sato (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)

Morning

Title: ‘Assessment for Learning Part I’



The number of participants: 23

Abstract: What are alternative assessments? How do alternative assessments support student learning? Yoshi will demonstrate assessment activities used in his university classes. Participants will experience alternative assessments and learn how these are tied to student learning.

Afternoon

Title: Preparation for group presentations

The number of participants: 20

Abstract: Participants will make collaboration groups (three JHS or three SHS teachers per group). They will choose a lesson from one of their textbooks and develop assessment activities for that lesson and an assessment plan for that year. Yoshi and Nancy will be advisers. (Participants should bring their school textbook all three days of the workshop.)



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

- Videotaping – it will give students motivation for their activities and also they can check or evaluate their performance. Moreover, by videotaping again after weeks, they can realize how they have improved their skills.
- ‘Warm-up’ booklet is a good tool to practice interaction. It guides us to natural conversation, and also helps to build up vocabulary and expressions with PUT notes.
- I want to have my students videotape their conversations next semester. The group test was interesting as well.
- I would like to try more recording in class, perhaps also students’ self-reflection on the topics, suggestions as to what other possible topic ideas we could explore, might be useful. I want to have more class debates about topics that students are interested in discussing!
- It was difficult to assess each speaker from the group conversation. When there are three people or more in a group, one ‘strong’ speaker tend to dominate the conversation. If that happens, should teachers give credit to the vest speaker? There are many aspects to consider so that teachers need to agree about what points should be valued the most.
- Of course, it’s interview. It’s really good exercise for students to review what they spoke. I always give students chances to interview with classmates twice in each lesson. I haven’t seen much progress in their speaking abilities. To see what they spoke in an interview must improve their speaking.
- To assess the speeches, I usually record the performances in video. But I’ve never show them to the students. I want to make them assess themselves. After the speaking test like ‘show and tell’, students can learn something from what they did by watching their own performances.
- Through the entire hand-on activities, I learned that I can use speaking tests in my class.



Although I need to set aside some time for the speaking assessment, it is worth trying that. It will facilitate students' improvement of communication skills.

- I'm interested in the integrated program. Dealing with the same topic many times gives students many chances to rehearse vocabulary and expressions.

2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- I noticed that my way of assessment was assessment of learning, not for learning. I really need to work on this matter. We, teachers tend to focus on the product. We need to focus on process more for the great product.
- That P.U.T is actually a very good and unique program compared to usual Japanese education curriculum. Conversation is extremely important, should be more focused on at an early stage of education.
- Before this workshop, I thought of assessments only as the results of something of something like tests. Now I was able to learn there are so many kinds of assessments like performance-based ones, or that we should make them learning experiences. I was really impressed to know the self-evaluation is an important way of assessment to know how hard students have tried.
- I learned the efficiency of content-based learning today. Every class is combined beautifully to achieve the last goal, which is to improve students' English communicative ability. I need to improve my handout using four language skills to improve my students' English ability.
- I was impressed by the idea that assessment must be not only the result but the jumping board to the next learning and that assessment is equated with curriculum itself.
- I found Bloom's taxonomy interesting because it tells me that our traditional ways of assessment tend to focus on the lowest levels. I'd like to change my assessment further more.
- When we make teaching plans, we should think of assessment. Usually I've thought of assessment later. And sometimes I didn't show how to assess to the students. Then the students can't see what to do or how to make an effort. We teachers should always show the clear goals before the class.
- When we introduce communicative activities in order to develop communicative competence, we should change the assessment, too. We can learn how university teachers assess students' communicative activities. We can no longer rely on traditional tests, such as true or false quiz or multiple choices quiz.



3. Questions and answers

Q (1): During the group conversation test, should students who speak too much and don't give other students a chance to speak be penalized?

A: Fortunately, it did not happen in my class. Before the recording, students had ample opportunities to practice speaking. As a result, they learned how to manage the time, how to share the speaking opportunities, and how to be a good listener and a speaker.

Q (2): Do you give rubrics to your students when the course starts like Dr. Kleinssaser

suggested? If yes, what kind of benefit do your students get by that?

A: To be honest, we did not give the rubric of the group speaking test in the beginning. Yet, we introduced it before the test so that students would be familiar with it. Of course, they practiced before the test, so that they would be familiar with the format. I have learned that it is wise to let the students know the rubric at the beginning of the course as Robert said.

Q (3): Is knowing/understanding/speaking Japanese an advantage/detriment to reaching English (as a native-English speaker)? Am I likely to lower my expectations of the students' ability? I'm thinking about this after Robert talked about comprehensibility...

A: As you saw the videos, it takes time for students to improve their communication skills. Teachers need to be patient. Nowadays, it is clear that native-like proficiency is not attainable for L2 learners. So, we need to set up practical goals according to the level of our students. You can set up goals in each semester. For example, in our department, we start with a 3-minute conversation and finish with a 5-minute conversation. In the second semester, we start with a 5-minute conversation and finish with a 7-minute conversation. Also, students will challenge more difficult topics in the second semester, including debates about abortion, euthanasia, and capital punishment. Good teaching facilitates student learning.



Q (4): So as Group Interview Test, what score did you give to these students? I would like to share with my opinion.

A: I will let you know the scores we gave to those students tomorrow morning.

Q (5): In textbooks of JHS, they deal with many topics (each unit has a topic). We have to teach all units. So we don't have much time to assess. Please give me some advice.

A: You don't have to give a speaking test after each unit. However, you need to give it at least once in a term. This is called a positive washback effect. Students invest more effort if they know how they will be assessed beforehand.

Q (6): It is time-consuming to create rubrics of speaking assessment and utilize them, being worth it. Then, I wonder how I can bring it to my school. I may need much time to persuade my colleagues to use them. At the first step, what should I do? (I am currently a part-time teacher at a senior high. I feel that I am powerless for now.)

A: Because of the guidelines of the Momkasho, we cannot ignore the goal to improve students' communication skills. More and more English teachers have started to incorporate a speaking test. The issue is assessment. You can introduce what you have learned to your colleagues. I'm sure that they would appreciate it. Also, I would like to recommend a book to you, "Authentic Assessment for English Language Learners," which includes many sample rubrics.

