

*Newsletter No. 5**< Summer Workshop 2009 >***“Assessment for Learning”***<Day 2>***Date:** August 4, 2009, 9:30- 16:30**Instructor:** Keiko Takahashi (Ikeda High School)**Morning****Title:** ‘Assessment for Learning in a High School Classroom’**The number of participants:** 24

Abstract: What happens if communicative activities are introduced in our class? How can we assess students' performance? We can no longer rely on traditional assessments such as true-false, matching, and multiple choice questions to assess students' communication skills. Eight years ago, teachers at my high school collaborated on more coherent assessment criteria. We introduced alternative assessments, with the result that students made progress in their performance tests. How can teachers use alternative assessments such as performance tests, portfolios, and self-assessments in our own classrooms? This workshop demonstrates how to use these assessments as they are currently being used in our "English Writing" classes.

**Afternoon****Title:** Preparation for group presentations**The number of participants:** 22**Abstract:** Participants will continue to work in their group on their assessment activities and year-long assessment plan. Yoshi and Nancy will be advisers.**1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?**

- All the handouts and the lesson contents are great. I especially liked the self-evaluation form for timed conversations. I also liked the idea of having students exchange comments on essays because it's hard for teachers to give nice lengthy comments on students' products time wise.
- I found the way conversation strategies are introduced quite helpful because it is scaffold very well from mechanical drills to real-life use in timed conversation.
- The steps Keiko took to lead the students to the final task are just great. The way to include/introduce conversation strategies is very practical. I want to try with the same way. Everything is integrated in a nice flow.
- Peer editing/correcting could be useful in my class. Not talked about in class, but in Keiko and Yoshi's paper they wrote about the importance of portfolios. I'd like to have my students make a portfolio.

- Peer-editing – students aren't requested to write correct sentences in the first stage, but they'll learn to write correct sentences by repeating peer-editing.
- Peer-editing – when students try English writing, they stop writing soon not because they cannot write but because they don't know what to write. However, through peer-editing they will realize what kind of information they should add or what is hard to understand. Peer-editing will make their writings more exciting, understandable and longer.
- It is interesting and impressive to spend much time on brainstorming and conversation strategies. Using different highlighters in peer-editing is easy to understand the important parts of the writing.
- Video-taping in conversation. It's important to record conversation and see it again and again to assess. For students they can reflect by watching their conversation and make draft of it. It'll be a really help to improve their speaking abilities.

2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- I was amazed the way students writing gets longer as students enjoy it, and at the same time, as a brick is stacked one by one steadily. It really helps me to reflect on my post-reading activity.
- Keiko sensei talked about students' 'peer comments' instead of teachers giving comments to all the students, letting students giving each other comments. This is very good in terms of both practicality and helping students involved actively in class. I also understand the importance of using assessment to know students' development and give proper advice to them.
- Video-taping speaking test is important. Without recording in tapes, it may be difficult to give the students scores.
- It's sometimes difficult to follow the guidelines for the rubric assessment. Based on my own subjective criteria, I might not be able to stick to strict outlines for grading...
- I thought 'some students seemed to be influenced by their partners' is true. In the videotape we saw today, two students are talking and their pronunciation and attitude were very similar. So it's important to consider how to make a group or a pair.
- I'm really amazed to see all the activities are well-organized. I used to make students try big activities from the beginning and it was sometimes hard for some students to follow it. But through those steps, by introducing expressions that will make conversations or writing more smooth, I realized more students would enjoy writing or speaking.
- The fun essays are very creative and wonderful. They could make them because they wrote and talked about the topic again and again and revised them. The activities are well-organized for students to achieve the goals.



3. Questions and answers

Q (1): 'Rubric' is the word I hear for the first time in this workshop. It looks assessment goes much more in detail before the class starts. What's the background bringing in the notion of rubric?

A: This is a big question. I'd like to learn about it in the workshop Prof Muto will offer on the third day.

Assessments, teaching and learning are the one. If we focus on the process of learning, we assess the process of learning. Prof Muto helped me define what a rubric is. A rubric is a criteria with score points and descriptions that show degrees of learner's skill. So rubrics can help both teachers and students understand goals of their learning and teaching. With rubrics, teachers can know what we want to do in class, that is, we can know what skills students should improve and how much support they need. With rubrics, students can understand the objectives of classroom activities and their learning goals.



Q (2): How do you define a “new question” and a “follow-up question”? I wasn’t sure if we need to assess students’ use of these two kinds of questions separately.

A: I agree with you. The word “new question” here means questions students have prepared for their conversation when they are engaged in their writing activity. If you look at the worksheet for writing activity (page 7), you can find a section of “Two New Questions”. Students prepare two questions they think they are going to use for timed-conversation. So some students want to know if they use the questions they have prepared and how many follow-up questions they can ask on the spot. In the transcription we examined today, that student used both words “follow-up question” and “new question” because the student wanted to check what follow-up questions he could use on the spot and which follow-up questions were the prepared ones. Most students do not distinguish “follow-up questions” and “new questions”.

Q (3): When I discussed the basic guidelines to assess students’ speaking, we began to make extra stages of points like 1.5, 2.5... with more detailed and complex criteria. Is it desirable to do this?

A: I think it is a good idea to give points like 1.5, 2.5 if we are not comfortable to fit into the scale of 1.2.3.4, for example. To tell the truth, I use the four-point scale for the first time this year. Last year, for example, I used 8 points for “fluency and content” category and gave points such as 8 points, 6 points, 4 points and 2 points to each level. Then I often gave half points such as 7 points or 5 points to several students.

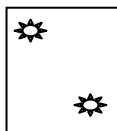
Q (4): When students concentrate on the content of their conversation, they can’t pay attentions to their pronunciation. How can we improve their pronunciation during conversations?

A: That’s a question I’d like to ask the participants of the workshop the same question. There are many activities which can improve their pronunciation and intonation. For example, “overlapping” and “shadowing” “rhythm practice using a song” “chants”, “story telling”. We have to incorporate those activities in a three-year English curriculum, which is something I should do for my students. In that way, we can pay attention to the content when students are engaged in timed-conversation and they can focus on pronunciation in other activities.

Q (5): How much time do you usually spend completing a speaking test for all of your students?

A: I spent one or two periods for speaking tests. In case of a large class, I use two video cameras in one room so that two pairs (four students) can take a speaking test at once.

video camera ☀



Q (6): When do you give that kind of performance tests? Not in class hour?

A: I give performance test during a class.

Q (7): Do you think that narrowing conversation strategies to ‘countable’ assessment criteria (e.g. ‘this student used shadowing 5 times during conversation’) means the overall conversation can’t be judged as a whole?

A: Exactly. We discussed that problem before, so we added the word “自然に” (naturally). We often find that conversation strategies students use do not work well. But at the same time, if it’s more specific, for example, instead of “many times”, if we use “five times or more” students can understand their expectation – goal- more easily.

Q (8): Do other high schools teach conversation strategies? During one to one interviews with my students, only one said they learned conversation strategies in high school.

A: The teachers who attend NUFS workshops teach conversation strategies (CS)! However, generally teaching CS tend to be overlooked at senior high school. Many students told me that they’d learned some basic strategies at junior high school, but that they didn’t notice how important the conversation strategies were until they actually tried to use them in timed-conversation at high school. So even if students practice CS at junior or senior high school, if teachers do not focus on them, students do not understand what CS are and how important to learn CS.

