

NUFS Workshop 2009

*Newsletter No. 6**< Summer Workshop 2009 >***“Assessment for Learning”****<Day 3>****Date:** August 5, 2009, 9:30- 16:30**Instructor:** Nancy Mutoh (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)**Morning****Title:** ‘Assessment for Learning (Part II)’**The number of participants:** 22

Abstract: How can assessment enhance student learning rather than only measuring it? Who should assess? What should be assessed and how? Participants will learn assessment principles through scenarios and hands-on activities, sometimes by thinking as teachers and other times by experiencing assessment as students. Participants will discuss how to adapt new assessment activities to their own classes and schools.

Afternoon**Title:** Group presentations**The number of participants:** 22**Abstract:** Participants made presentations and shared their assessment activities.**1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?**

- I’d like to use self-assessment sheet to develop the skills of self reflect. “If you want to maximize learning, teach students to assess themselves.” I’d like to keep it in mind.
- It was very interesting, new and exciting for me to know the ideas of summative, formative and a many kinds of competence. I realized to analyze activities by using these points of view would enable me to make better activities.
- The way to negotiate meaning each other – giving students clues make students remember the things they learned.
- When we have students introduce themselves in the first lesson, additional one thing (about each student) would activate their conversation.
- Warm-up activity – introducing myself was fun. Adding one more thing that others might not know was interesting because we could find different aspect of classmates.



- Negotiation of meaning – participants had to guess the meaning of the 3 visual things in the handouts and figure out what they mean by discussing with the other members of a group. Nancy showed us good examples to give clues to the participants.
- Analyses of assessment activities using the check sheet make us realize that communicative activities in the classroom give good impacts on learners.

2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- Formative assessment is important to facilitate learning. I'd like to focus on the process of learning, and I'd like to use formative assessment for it.
- There are many ways to assess communicative competence. I don't understand clearly still now. But I want to read handout again and find out what are 'grammatical competence', 'sociolinguistic competence' 'discourse competence' and 'strategic competence'.
- As a matter of fact, I still don't understand what I have learned today fully, but I feel it's interesting and well worth mastering it. I want to explain it to my colleagues so I'll read all the materials again to understand it more deeply.
- 'When the cook tasted the soup, that's formative. When the guests taste the soup, that's summative.' This explanation helped me with understanding. We need to use formative assessment in order to have students get good summative assessment. Moreover, I knew we should teach students how to assess themselves if we want to improve their abilities.
- I learned how different the effect is between traditional written tests and alternative assessment that have been introduced in this session. The prime purpose of assessment is to aid the teaching and learning process. Teachers must keep in mind that alternative assessment is what really supports both teachers and students.
- I learned the difference among assessment of, for, as learning. Traditional approach is just checking what students do but alternative approach is involving students assessing and checking themselves in order to become independent.
- I realized that the tests I conducted as term tests, not only writing tests but also speaking tests, were for measurement of grammatical competence. I planned communicative activity to build students' communicative competence but actually I only assessed their grammatical competence. There was obviously a construct validity problem.



3. Questions and answers

Q (1): In conceptual tools for understanding assessments, the definitions of these three categories are still not clear for me: 1) summative or formative, 2) norm-referenced and 3) criterion referenced. Please explain.

A: *Summative assessment* is assessment at the *end* of a unit, term, or semester. You can remember the meaning because "summative" resembles the word "summary." A summative assessment measures, or summarizes, how well or poorly a student mastered something. A term test and a final speaking test are both examples of summative assessment. Summative assessment is important because it gives students a specific goal to aim for and deadline by which to reach it. An effective summative assessment that matches the learning goals tells both the student and teacher how successful the student was in reaching

the goals.

Formative assessment means assessment *during the learning process*. Formative assessment helps to form and improve students' learning by giving the student and the teacher an understanding of what the student has successfully learned so far and what has not yet been sufficiently learned. It shows a student's strong and weak areas while there is still time to improve learning before that learning segment ends.

Formative assessment, therefore, has not only a measuring function but also a pedagogical function. Assessing students' learning continually during a unit, term, or semester gives the teacher information about how to modify teaching in order to help students improve their learning of the current material.

Formative assessment includes small tests and performance activities that are integrated into the learning process. It also includes informal, ongoing monitoring by the teacher of a student's learning – strengths, weaknesses, misunderstandings, sudden “catching on,” etc. This is also called *dynamic assessment* because the teacher changes the method and content of his or her response to match the student's learning needs. Such assessment includes timely questions that lead a student to the next level of understanding, as well as scaffolding and suggestions that address a particular point the student appears to be confused or unsure about.

Norm-referenced assessment means that a student is given a mark (5 to 1 or A to D) that shows how that student's test score compares to other students' scores. If all students do quite well or quite badly on a test, that fact is not visible in the grades. The grades are spread in fixed proportions so that the same percentage of students receives the same grade each term. This allows the school to rank and compare students.

Criterion-referenced assessment compares a student's score to a fixed standard, which is a set of criteria that are decided before the assessment occurs. The criteria describe the characteristics of a performance or score that qualifies as excellent, good, satisfactory, weak, or unsatisfactory. A criterion-referenced grade does not show how a student's score compares to other students' scores. If all students do well, or all do poorly, they will all get the grade that matches their actual performance, based on the criteria.



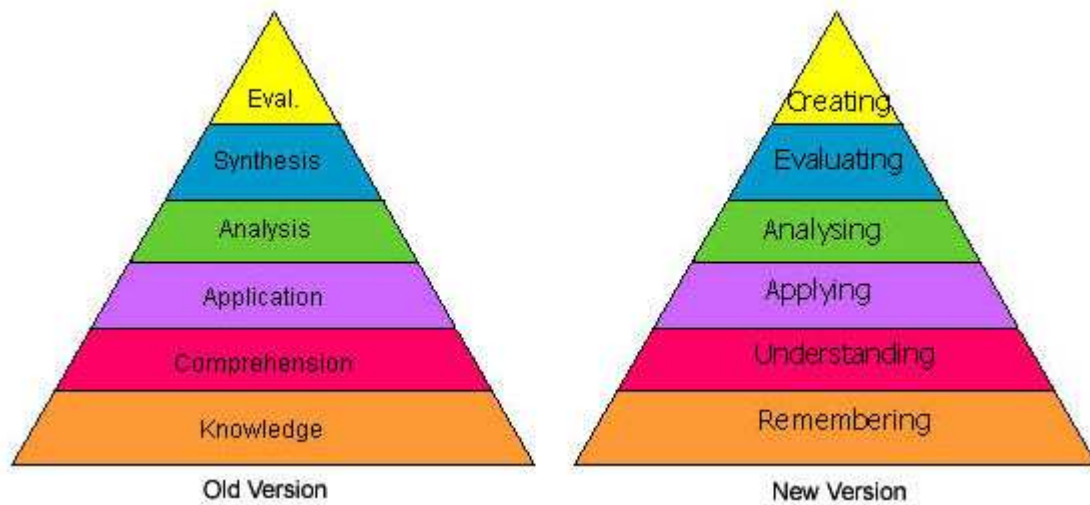
Q (2): In Bloom's Taxonomy, I think all levels are interrelated and can't be classified as he does. What do you think?

A: I agree that between neighboring levels there is some fuzziness about how exactly to distinguish one from the other. In addition, many kinds of tasks, especially complex tasks or ones that involve several steps, include several types of mental activity.

You will be interested to know that there is a revised Bloom Taxonomy. You can find many websites

about it by searching “revised bloom taxonomy” . The following webpage has two diagrams that show the old and new versions side by side.

http://projects.coe.uga.edu/epltt/index.php?title=Bloom%27s_Taxonomy



This website gives information about the development of both the original and revised taxonomies. It explains the reasons for and nature of the revision. Please have a look if you're interested!

The value of a taxonomy of cognitive skills is that it raises our awareness of the need to examine what kinds of thinking we have students do in our classes. The higher order thinking skills are especially valued in society. Being able to apply, analyze, evaluate, and create contribute especially to a person's ability to adapt successfully to a changing job market and society and are central skills in problem solving. These higher order thinking skills are also the most interesting for most people, so contribute to motivation and sense of satisfaction in learning. We need, therefore, to monitor what kind of “cognitive balance” our teaching provides our students and be sure that we give enough learning activities at the upper cognitive levels.

A traditional model of teaching based on teacher explanations and on summative tests that measure how much information students have successfully remembered emphasizes the lower levels of cognitive skills. It doesn't usually focus on what they can do with the information they learned. A significantly better balance of cognitive skills is provided by collaborative, activity-based learning, which includes multi-skill language use, collaboration in pairs and groups on information-sharing activities, negotiation of meaning and content, and “final products” that require a process of creation, analysis, and revision. Both models exist in all fields of study, including foreign language learning.

Q (3): I wonder if these assessment factors and construct validity tests had been used when I was learning Japanese, would my Japanese be far better than it is?

A: Yes, it is interesting to think back on our own foreign language learning experience, isn't it? In your case, you are the best person to answer your question. I don't know what kind of learning experience you have had with Japanese, but you can compare it to one in which:

- Teaching goals are explicit and match your own learning goals.
- Assessment matches learning goals.
- You are told the evaluation criteria early on and have chances to use the criteria to evaluate your own learning.

- Your teachers closely monitor your learning so they can see when you are struggling (or conversely when you are on the brink of new understanding) and what kind of help, or timely assist, you need.

It's never too late. Please look for a new teacher of Japanese who will accept guidance from you about how you want to be taught!

Q (4): What are some good ways to encourage negotiation in my class?

A: Negotiation of meaning is when pairs or groups of students work together ...

- (A) To figure out what a piece of written or spoken English means (negotiating receptive use of English)
- (B) To figure out how to put English together to make it mean what they want to communicate (negotiating productive use of English)

Examples of giving students occasions for negotiating receptive use of English:

1. In any pair or group work that is spontaneous talking (not memorized), there is both receptive and productive negotiation of meaning as students try to understand their partner's meaning and explain their own. By learning communication strategies (What do you mean by that?, etc.) their negotiation becomes more efficient and productive.
2. Give students written or spoken instructions in English (at their approximate level of comprehension) and have them work together to verify what they are supposed to do. Then check also as a whole class by demonstrating, showing a sample, or translating.
3. Before giving an explanation of a confusing place in a reading passage, give students a couple of minutes to work together in pairs or fours to guess what they think the meaning is in Japanese. Collect several guesses before explaining. Someone is apt to guess the correct meaning, which is exciting for everyone!
4. The following can be a pre-reading activity for a true or fictional narrative in the textbook. Tell your students that you will tell a short story and then they will check their understanding by talking with a partner about the story and writing brief notes in Japanese about it. Tell the story in easy English that your students can mostly understand. When new words are necessary, write them on the board as they occur in the story and write the Japanese equivalent as well. Tell the story once, give discussion and writing time, then tell the story again followed by a little more talking and writing time. In your oral story, you can omit the ending and a number of interesting points in the narrative, so there is both familiar and unfamiliar content when students read. Collect students' Japanese notes and give a brief written comment acknowledging the parts they successfully understood and noted.



Examples of giving students occasions for negotiating productive use of English:

1. Natural conversation is based on constant negotiation of meaning since each person's comment is supposed to build on the partner's previous comment. The participants in the conversation "build" it together. There are frequent occasions for requesting repetition and clarification,

- correcting misunderstandings, commenting on the partner's statement or asking a follow-up question for more details about something. These are all negotiation of meaning actions.
2. Likewise with having a student read and comment on a classmate's writing. Again, negotiation actions include asking for clarification or more information, suggesting additional possible content and, as a reader, giving comments and opinions about both the content and the organization of content or language use.
 3. Another activity would be showing students a short piece of text with one sentence missing and having them collaborate to write a suitable sentence to "fill the hole" in the flow of meaning.
 4. Likewise, the teacher can tell a simple story to a certain point and then stop. Students are told to work with a partner to make an ending for the story and be ready to tell it to other classmates. Partners split up and new groups are formed. Each person tells their group their ending for the story. This can be a review activity if the story is based loosely on a recent lesson or a pre-reading activity if based on a new lesson.

These are only some examples. Students in a class that is taught and assessed communicatively have many chances to learn through negotiating meaning. In this way, they steadily develop communicative competence (linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence) in all 4 skills, experience increasing confidence in their English ability and also usually increasing motivation.

<Day 4>

Date: August 6, 2009 8:30-12:30

Venue: Green Hotel Sangane, Conference Room

Advisors: Kazuyoshi Sato & Nancy Mutoh (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)

The number of participants: 16

Abstract: Each participant made the mid-term presentation on his/her action research, and had a discussion.



Workshop in September (Planned)

Date: September 19, 2009 10:30-17:00

Venue: Nagoya NSC College

Title: 'Promoting teacher development through peer observation'

Instructors: Juanita Heigham (Sugiyama Women's University) & Robert Croker (Nanzan University)