How to Evaluate Students in English Courses Using 3-Dimensional Interactive Education System

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The author is one of the four instructors in English at Kyushu University who use the 3-Dimensional Interactive Education System (3d-ies) as members of a three-year research program into foreign language education that utilizes 3d-ies.

3d-ies makes it possible for students to enter 3-dimensional cyberspaces under the disguise of an alter ego (avatar) and have a chat on a written basis with other people through avatars. It is not known which avatar corresponds to which person in the real world and therefore students can have communication without being ashamed of their English levels.

The present paper aims at consideration of how to evaluate students' class activities in 3d-ies English classes. It is one of appropriate ways of grading students to give them a general English examination to know how much improvement in English proficiency they get as a result of taking a 3d-ies English course. It is also possible, however, to evaluate their class activity, my major concern in this paper. Their chat log stored in a server shows us how often each student makes utterances. The author proposes that we should also take into consideration how long their utterances are. There are two reasons. First, they could, if they wanted, increase the number of their utterances by dividing their single utterances of a regular length into more than one shorter utterance. This might lead to too high a grade. If the length also counts, the tactics above is meaningless. Secondly, the frequency evaluation alone renders the distribution of students' grades so broad as to produce too many F(ailure) grades. Frequency evaluation, when coupled with length consideration,

leads to grades of moderate range. It should also be added that, although qualitative evaluation of their utterances is also in order, it is next to impossible for a single instructor to look through chat log containing thousands of utterances and evaluate grammatical and practical accuracy of each.