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ABSTRACT

This paper will first explore how rubrics have been used at the classroom level as an authentic form of assessment. Unlike traditional types of assessment, this style empowers both the teacher and the learner in defining what criteria and level of performance are needed to achieve a goal. A videobook project will then be introduced and a rubric created to measure learners' level on assignments required for the project. It is hoped that learners' will gain a deeper understanding of input being received through the use of the rubric and that the approximate stage of input can be gauged through student level of performance.

Introduction

Looking and evaluating an end product can be helpful in deciding what is required in the beginning and developing stages. Historically, assessment had been used for the selection of individuals to maintain power and control among different social classes (Gipps, 1999, p356) Even within the school system, assessment in the form of IQ testing was used to identify those that will most likely be able to continue to higher education. This and other forms of testing usually were resolute, culturally biased and overlooked the minority viewpoint. The recent trends in educational assessment look toward empowerment of the individual through what has been defined as authentic assessment. This report will look at rubrics and how they have been used as a tool for authentic assessment in an educational setting. A rubric will then be drafted and incorporated in an

existing videobook proposal that tries to achieve listening and reading comprehension gains for beginning level English learners in Japan while measuring i+1 input level.

Literature review of rubrics

In viewing assessment, Gipps (1999), Hafner, J. & Hafner, P. (2003) and others state that reliability and validity are key constructs. The point being that test should *consistently* measure whatever it measures and *accurately* measure what it ought to measure. The CRESST (the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing) at the University of California, Los Angeles provides an expanded role for validity that now subsumes fairness to *all* students and public credibility. In subsuming these concepts, the philosophy underlying ‘traditional objective assessment’ has been altered leading the way to authentic assessment, which is both objectively and subjectively generated. Earlier forms of traditional assessments will not disappear soon so most likely in the future various forms of assessment will be the norm for upcoming learners and teachers. Rubrics, especially those that have been collaboratively developed, are part of the new critical-theoretic approach that orients itself toward eliminating oppression in human relationship (e.g., Gipps, 1999, p371). As mentioned earlier, assessments were first used for the selection process in order to maintain rank among groups of people and are contrary to this new method.

Simply put, a rubric is an assessment tool that allows one to see the criteria of a task and the level of performance for each criterion. Andrade (2000), Huffman (1998), and Hafner, J. & Hafner, P. (2003) agree that having both teacher and student input in developing a rubric can lead to ownership and empowerment that characterizes authentic forms of assessment. The rating system should be ‘absolutely transparent’ and be easily understood by everyone involved (Dornyei, 2001, p132). Providing learners with a rubric crystallizes the necessary elements that will be required and focuses the learners’ attention to what has been agreed upon to be important. With this visual guide in hand, learners as well as teachers can become self-evaluators of established or constructed goals in the learning process. By the joint efforts of the learners and teacher, rubrics can support learning through meta-cognition (e.g., Andrade, 2000, p3). The following table is an example of an excerpt of a rubric for a persuasive essay from Andrade (2000, p2):

Criteria	4	3	2	1
Word choice	The words are striking but natural, varied, and vivid.	The words are fine and routine choices.	The words are often dull or uninspired or sound pretentious.	The same words are used over and over. Some are confusing.

(Table 1: Excerpt from a persuasive essay rubric)

This rubric list the criteria and level of performance using a four point scale though one can easily see how a wide range of assessment criteria can be added and measured on a five or ten point scale.

Starting with the rubric and backward planning a task can assure the necessary components addressed in the rubric are covered. It is crucial that learners' deficiencies be acknowledged and dealt with by offering them advanced preparation and assistance when needed. Listing just a few criteria can often be a better option if one chooses to assess quality over quantity. In the case of the above rubric, if teachers want to somewhat guarantee that learners use striking, varied and vivid words in their essay then contextual vocabulary development would be essential. Huffman (1998, p67) suggests that by providing clarity and understanding through class and one-to-one discussions, learners gain confidence and commitment in applying the rubric to a task.

Incorporating rubrics into assessment is not enough; they should be aligned with state and national standards as well as the curriculum set forth by these bodies in order to be valid (Andrade, 2005, p30). By providing direction, these standards and curriculum can assure teachers that they are not taking a *carte blanche* approach to the education of the learners when the rubric is included in their instructional method.

An interesting research report by Hafner, J. & Hafner, P. (2003) investigated reliability and validity when rubrics were used for assessment. Unlike other studies that had looked at rubrics and confirmed reliability and validity from a teacher perspective, their study was done to check the reliability and validity of rubrics as a performance tool in the hands of students. Their investigation aimed to see whether untrained student rubric users would agree among peer groups on performance level as measured by a rubric and if the student rubric users would agree with the teachers' performance level. The study took place in three successive years from 1998-2000 at Occidental College in Los Angeles, California. The performance task was an oral presentation for a library research project and the rubric was collaborately constructed the first year with student input. Before being used the particulars of the rubric were discussed with the students to insure clarity and accurate use. The results for inter-rater reliability show that students agreed strongly in their ability to assess different level of performances in oral presentations using the rubric. An interesting observance was that the students who jointly constructed the rubric in 1998 had a greater degree of reliability perhaps because of a deeper understanding of the criteria used in the rubric. For validity, the results indicated that the students' mean score and the teacher's score were not significantly different thus demonstrating that the students generally scored the oral presentations the same as the teacher. In fact, Hafner, J & Hafner, P. (2003, p1520) state that students' scores can predict the teacher's score with a 1:1 relationship in accuracy. When student self-

assessments were analyzed, the data indicated that the rubric provided a valid measurement of their own performance. This holds well in drawing attention of learners' goals in the learning process as part of Dornyei's (2001, p29) motivational teaching practice model.

Project proposal overview

The core of this project began with Krashen's (as cited in Mitchell and Myers, 2004, pp. 44-49) *i+1* input hypothesis. To investigate the validity of this hypothesis, a videobook input was surmised to verify whether *i+1* could be achieved for beginning Japanese learners of English. As the project grew in detail, a story map advance organizer was added to preview the videobook input and help the learners make sense of the story. As a tool to aid both working and long term memory, advance organizers allow the learner to process input with less effort. Using the analogy of a dog, the 'head' and 'body' of the project were fashioned and only the 'tail' remained to be construed. Though this project might be regarded as 'middle planning' because the body of the project was developed first, the assessment appears to capture the *i+1* input level by incorporating a rubric to assess a scale of student achievement based on 'input' criteria.

Method

Although this is only a proposal, the prospective subjects as mentioned earlier will be beginning learners of English at a Japanese educational institution. The subjects could vary in age from elementary school students to adult learners since fictional narrative videobooks tend to appeal to a broad spectrum of learners. As narratives often reflect the culture of a society using an "English" story for the videobook can help introduce the culture and take learners beyond the four walls of the classroom. The importance of narratives for the cohesion of a culture is great and stirs imagination advocates Bruner (1996, pp 39-42). By including cultural components, a positive and open-minded disposition toward the L2 culture will be increased (Dornyei, 2001, p55).

A videobook as defined here is a fictional narrative book that has been turned into a video so it can control the amount of input being processed and dissimilar to a normal video input where a vast quantity of information need to be managed. Selective attention allows proper processing speed, which is one of the three conditions of the decoding process, to be present (Rost, 2005, p504). The videobook will be divided into plausible sections and a subsuming story map will be used for all sections while a more detailed story map will be employed for each subsection. Through story maps, learners can have a continual concrete representation to reflect on. Story Maps with Character Perspectives (SMCP) as acknowledged by Emery (1996), allow for learners to engage in the discussion

of character perspectives and permit them an opportunity to evaluate the story map's rudiments.

The videobook unit appears to tie in with the curriculum set forth by the MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) of Japan in its overall foreign language objective for the course of study for lower secondary schools to develop students' basic practical communication abilities such as listening and speaking while developing an understanding of the foreign language and culture (2007, www.mext.go.jp/english/shotou/030301.htm).

As the hypothesis investigates the listening and reading comprehension level of learners exposed to a curriculum unit for a videobook, a discrete item pre and posttest will be used for the traditional assessment. The discrete item tests will measure the learners understanding through an objective multiple-choice format with English cues. The listening comprehension test will use oral passages for its nucleus and provide choices in written responses while the reading comprehension test will focus on the elements of a fictional story through written questions and responses. If possible, the English written questions and responses will be translated into Japanese so as not to confound the skill in listening and reading comprehension with the skill in reading English. An experimental group using the videobook unit and a control group without the videobook will provide data for this study.

Role of Assessment in the Project

As this project tries to measure learners' achievement in both traditional and authentic forms, assessment will take on a bigger role. The traditional type of assessment that will be used was mentioned earlier and rubrics will be used for the authentic form. Though researchers agree that collaboratively developing a rubric fosters ownership and understanding, a Japanese foreign language classroom with a limited English speaking capacity might provide too big a challenge given the time constraints and adherence to a rigid curriculum. Authentic forms of assessment such as rubrics and student portfolios are often time consuming and beyond the skills of the learners (Gipps, 1999, p378). Though Huffman (1998, p68) notes that with practice, the time needed to create a rubric decreases and the benefits are remarkable.

A four-point rubric will be used to determine the quality of the individual story maps but not be weighed in the traditional objective listening and reading comprehension scores. There will be three criteria for the rubric: Understanding the Elements of a Fictional Story, Character Analysis, and Story Retell. These criteria often parallel traditional reading and listening comprehension assessment but delve into the details and support learning. Table 2 displays the tentative rubric that will be used:

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Understands story elements	Student knows the names and description of the characters. Can tell when and where the story happened.	Student knows the names and descriptions of the important characters and where the story takes place.	Student knows the names OR descriptions of the important characters in the story.	Student has trouble naming and describing the characters in the story.
Thinks about the characters	Student describes how different characters might have felt at different points in the story and points out some pictures or words to support his interpretation.	Student describes how different characters might have felt at different points in the story, and provides general support for the interpretation.	Student describes how different characters might have felt at different points in the story, but does NOT provide good support for the interpretation.	Student cannot describe how different characters might have felt at different points in the story.
Story retell	Student accurately describes what has happened in the story and tries to predict "what will happen next."	Student accurately describes what has happened in the story.	Student accurately describes most of what happened in the story.	Student has difficulty re-telling the story.

(Table 2: Story map rubric)

As the rubric will be used to assist learners in the completion of their story maps, it may show how Krashen’s (as cited in Mitchell and Myers, 2004, pp. 44-49) i+1 level might be critiqued. If the learners tend to score in the middle part of the spectrum, one might be able to reason that the input was at the appropriate level. If the learners tend to score on the higher end of the spectrum, one might be able to reason that the input was too simple and not at the appropriate level. What might be baffling is if the learners score all over the spectrum or at the lower end of the spectrum because then one might have to assume that the input was invalid.

When the traditional objective multiple-choice tests are given, they may also provide additional information to see if the i+1 level was achieved. If the scores represent

the normal bell shape then one could say that the level was achieved but if the bell shape was swayed to the high side then that might represent the input being too easy and if swayed to the low side too difficult.

Hopefully, by using both authentic and traditional forms of assessment in this project, it will be able to assess whether the i+1 input level was attained.

Conclusion

As this action research enters into the final stage of implementation, the particulars of the unit have mostly been worked out. The story map or 'head', videobook or 'body' and rubric or 'tail' form a complete picture of the dog. The subjects will most likely be Japanese junior high school students whose English proficiency is low thus classifying them as beginning level English learners. The data from the research will be forthcoming.

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