Washback to Move Forward: Designing Performance-based Assessments to Measure Course Objectives

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What is Washback?

• the influence of testing on teaching & learning
  - Brown (2002)

• “...natural tendency for both teachers and students to tailor their classroom activities to the demands of the test, especially when the test is very important to the future of the students, and pass rates are used as a measure of teacher success... washback effect can be either beneficial or harmful.” – Buck (1988)
Washback effects

Beneficial =

Student: “Do we need to do this on the test?”
Teacher: “Of course... and in life!”

Harmful =

Student: “Do we need to do this in real life?”
Teacher: “Well, no, but it will be on the test, so you should study it.”
Assessments should be...

- **Valid** (measure what it is supposed to measure)
- **Reliable** (results in very similar scores if given to the same set of learners under the same conditions multiple times)
- **Reasonable** (can be done efficiently considering class size, time, technology, space, etc.)
- **Authentic** (real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills - Mueller (2010))
Objectives should ...

• Be based on learner needs / program goals

• Be realistic for level

• Focus on what the learner will do

• Include important conditions

• Be measurable / observable

- Morrison, Ross, & Kemp (2001)
## Speaking Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Objectives – SWBAT…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objectives</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I.</strong> Maintain eye contact with audience</td>
<td><strong>I.</strong> Maintain eye contact with audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II.</strong> Ask for clarification when needed</td>
<td><strong>II.</strong> Ask for clarification when needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III.</strong> Answer impromptu questions of</td>
<td><strong>III.</strong> Answer impromptu questions of clarification from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>III.</strong> Answer impromptu questions of clarification from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IV.</strong> Express opinions in a polite way</td>
<td><strong>IV.</strong> Express opinions in a polite way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>V.</strong> Support opinions with facts</td>
<td><strong>V.</strong> Support opinions with facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VI.</strong> Use appropriate words from the academic</td>
<td><strong>VI.</strong> Use appropriate words from the academic word list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>VI.</strong> Use appropriate words from the academic word list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VII.</strong> Pronounce “p”, “b”, “f”, “v”, and</td>
<td><strong>VII.</strong> Pronounce “p”, “b”, “f”, “v”, and “w” correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Speaking Assessment Choices (Prepared or Impromptu?)

- Interview by teacher
- Individual or group presentation
- Debate
- Drama / skit / role play of certain situation
- Conversation test w/ partner
- Voice recording
- Poster session
- Discussion skills test in groups of 3 or 4
My Assessment Choice =

Impromptu Discussion Skills Test

Why?
- Assess 3 or 4 learners at a time
- Multi-way, authentic interaction ➔ Autonomy!
- Less intimidating (Fulcher, 1996)(Shohamy, Reeves & Bejarano, 1986)
- Language at learners’ level (Egyud & Glover, 2001)
Measure objectives w/ rubrics

A rubric can...

- clarify expectations.
- create beneficial washback.
- make grades more accurate.
- make grading easier.
- measure performance-based objectives!
Cardinal rule of rubrics

Rubric items = list of objectives with values assigned

• Design your own rubrics!
• Weight values accordingly!
• Write scoring descriptors!
**Tailor Rubrics to YOUR objectives!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active Listening</strong></td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o asks for clarification when needed using practiced language stems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o helps others understand when needed using practiced language stems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meaningful Production</strong></td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o gives opinions politely using practiced language stems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o supports opinions with facts using practiced language stems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clarity</strong></td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o pronounces target sounds (p, b, f, v, &amp; w) clearly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o maintains eye contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o uses appropriate target vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scoring Descriptors

100% = Uses practiced language stems very well & almost always
• Not native-speaker-like, but very effective in communicating & in helping others
• Does a lot to facilitate conversation

90% = Uses practiced language stems well & often
• Effective, but imperfect
• Does his/her part in conversation

80% = Uses practiced language stems at least some of the time
• Minimum pass
• Makes mistakes, but does more to help conversation than to hurt it

70% = Didn’t use practiced language stems, but still got the basic point across
• Made an attempt, but was generally ineffective
## Writing Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Objectives – SWBAT...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write in English about an academic topic.</td>
<td>I. Compose a cohesive piece of writing that includes a topic sentence, supporting sentences, a closing sentence and appropriate discourse markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II. Format an MS Word document for academic writing by setting a specific font style, font size, and line spacing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>III. Spell correctly with the help of a computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IV. Use appropriate words from the academic word list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V. Use appropriate pronominal references</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing Assessment Choices

In groups...

1. Brainstorm possible assessment choices and choose 1 that you all agree on. Why did you choose that one over the other options?
Writing Assessment Choices (Timed or Multi-draft?)

• Blog
• Essay
• Summary
• Journal
• Paragraph
• Research paper
• Email

• Pamphlet / Brochure
• Reflection
• Report
• Story
• Instructions / Recipe
Tailor Rubrics to YOUR objectives!

2. Create a rubric that will measure the objectives connected to your assessment choice. Remember to weight values accordingly and write scoring descriptors.

3. Share your assessment choice and rubric with another group and discuss.
My Assessment Choice =

Timed Compare / Contrast Paragraph using a computer

Why?
- Realistic for university situations
- See what learners can do on own → Autonomy!
  - Clear discourse markers & pattern
Tailor **Rubrics** to **YOUR objectives!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student followed the formatting rules. (Typed in Arial 12 pt. font, double-spaced, indented)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student wrote a good topic sentence with a topic &amp; clear focus.</td>
<td>2 4 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student wrote relevant supporting sentences in a logical order.</td>
<td>2 4 6 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student wrote a closing statement that restates the main idea using different words.</td>
<td>2 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students used a variety of appropriate discourse markers.</td>
<td>2 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student used correct spelling.</td>
<td>2 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student used appropriate pronominal references.</td>
<td>2 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL** / 34
References

Brown, J.D. (2002). Extraneous variables and the washback effect. JALT vol. 6 No. 2


Washback to Move Forward!

Questions?

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# Presentation Content

- Time was used well (report was not too long or short)
- Content was clearly organized: no unnecessary repetition and clear transitions
- Content was convincing (very important!)
- Content was well researched and academic in nature (very important)
- Opinion was clear
- Conclusion was clear: summarized presentation AND cross examination

## Visual Aid & its Use

- Chart or graph was appropriate for an academic setting
- Information shown on the graph was useful for explaining the topic
- The chart or graph was readable and easy to understand (with explanation)
- Clearly explained the visual aid (chart or graph), which added content to the presentation

## Cross Examination

- Pointed cross-examination questions
- Convincing answers to cross examination questions (prepared to answer)
- Maintained professional/academic tone and demeanor
- Able to use the language of the topic

## Speaking

- Fluency (clear, smooth speech – not too many hesitations or repeats)
- Pauses/ hesitation markers (did not use too many: “like”, “so”, “uh, um”, yeah etc.)
- Clarity (voice was loud enough and pace was good)
- Confidence and interaction (Look at the audience; not too nervous)
- Vocabulary (Used Presentation vocabulary; used vocabulary OK for topic)
- Grammar (improved on grammar focus; could be understood easily by native speakers)
- Pronunciation (Could be understood easily by native speakers. Sounds, stress patterns, intonation)
- Used language of agreeing, disagreeing, and expressing opinions in a tactful way.

## TOTAL
Introduction (___/7)
catches the reader’s attention with a statistic or interesting question 0 1 2
includes enough good background information 0 1 2
the thesis statement (w/ both types of special words) is the last sentence 0 1 2 3

Body paragraphs (___/20)
icludes a topic sentence that is related to the thesis statement 0 1 2
second body paragraph has a topic sentence that uses compare & contrast signal words 0 1 2
explains the topic sentence with good main supporting sentences 0 1 2
uses a variety (mix) of details (fact, example, scenario, personal story) 0 1 2 3 4
uses connector words effectively for a smooth paragraph 0 1 2
uses a variety (mix) of compare/contrast signal words 0 1 2 3
has a good closing sentence in different words 0 1 2
ideas are interesting 0 1 2 3

Conclusion (___/5)
starts with “In conclusion” or “In short” or some other phrase 0 1
restates the thesis in different words 0 1
gives a good final thoughts that connect to catch 0 1 2 3

Whole paper (___/13)
uses grammar that is understandable 0 2 4 6 8 10
uses correct pronouns (no “you” or “I”) 0 1 2
is double spaced, formatted correctly and paragraphs are indented 0 1

Total Score ____ / 45