Moreland University M25U3A2

Language Assessment Tool

- Joel Pope

Student Age and Background: Students are 4 – 5 years old. They are all Chinese students living in China (Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province), who have Mandarin Chinese or local dialects as their mother tongue. English is the second language but is the language at school.

Language Components Assessed: Speaking, Listening

21st Century Skills Assessed: Presentation, communication, creativity, leadership, social skills.

21st Century Skills Assessed in Alternative Versions: Collaboration

Context:

Students all have English as the second language. The language used at school, for both daily live and class time is primarily English. However, all staff except one international homeroom teacher in each class also have Chinese as a first language and Chinese will be used to support as necessary. Hence, overall, there is a bilingual environment, with a focus on English to support student's English language development.

Students in the class have been studying at the school for an average of two years and are now able to comprehend English in everyday situations and class activities. They are all of similar language ability, late in the 'speech emergence' or in the 'intermediate fluency' stage from Krashen and Terrell (1983) – pre-production, early production, speech emergence, intermediate fluency and advanced fluency.

Currently, the language focus is on continuing to support students in their ability to produce English freely, as well as on asking questions and interacting in English. Reading and writing are only being practiced informally and through play, so will not be assessed. In fact, research (Alexander, 2010; Almon, 2011; Elley, 1992; Suggate, 2009; Whitebread, 2013) suggests against formal instruction and testing of such skills, due to increased pressure and anxiety and no gain in the long run.

These speaking and listening skills will be assessed. High-quality assessment should also include broader thinking and 21st-century skills (Darling-Hammond et al., 2013). In light of this, there will be three parts to the assessment. First an interview with the teacher, practicing communication skills. Next, a presentation to a group of three classmates, practicing presentation and presentation as a different form of communication, as well as leadership. Finally, a follow-up discussion with their group mates in which they ask each other one questions and say one thing they head their classmates say. Johnson (n.d.) suggests the use of an "oral presentation of performance" instead of an exam, and Smart (2016) suggests use of a "student-teacher conference" or "student-generated questions by peers." Shaaban (2001) also suggests and "oral interview", "student-teacher performance" and "presentation".

A rubric will be used for assessment as suggested by Johnson (n.d.) The document for this has pictures, making it in child-friendly format. Specific and meaningful feedback is crucial for child development (Valdez-Pierce, n.d.). Hence, the rubric will be filled in with the student's together, feedback filled in at the same time.

The Assessment

For this project, students will start by drawing their ideas for a 'See, Think, Wonder' chart, of a type they have used before. In this way they are also practicing fine motor skills and creativity as a further 21st century skill. Students in the class are all currently interested in the character Nezha, from a recent Chinese movie. They are also familiar with and enjoy the traditional Chinese stories, "Journey to the West" and "Three Kingdoms". Athanases and de Oliveira (2020) and Hammond (2020) both emphasize the importance of getting to know students and their cultural backgrounds and then using this knowledge to create an assessment relevant to them. Hence, the topic of the 'See, Think, Wonder' will be pictures inspired by these stories.

There will be three different pictures, one for each story. Each student will get one (each type of picture will hence be had by multiple students). They will each complete their 'See, Think, Wonder' drawings. Then they will get in a group, one person for each picture in each group. They will present their work to each other.

After the presentation, the group mates will each ask a question and say something they heard.

In this sense, real-world and meaningful communication about a topic of interest is practiced. While it is true, that saying something you heard from your group mate's presentation is a little superficial, it also practices the valuable skill of rephrasing and active listening.

Due to the focus being on free speaking and use of English, there are no specific sentence structures given as the target.

Pictures for 'See, Think, Wonder'.

'See, Think, Wonder' chart, which students will fine in.

Rubric.

Possible Adaptations

The general format of this test is, student and teacher interview, followed by presentation, followed by student dialogue.

This same format could be applied as a routine to different scenarios.

- Presenting a different piece of work.
- Talking about a picture, related to a topic or vocabulary being studied.

It could also be adapted with specific target sentences included, either as prompts, or if these are being practiced.

If English levels in the class were varying, different rubrics could be created with different levels of language demand.

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