

June 23rd English Roundtable Web Chat on Classroom Assessment

Roundtable Moderator: The most difficult part sometimes is to get the students to understand our new approach to assessment. It takes time and training. It's like building trust. But when they understand it and begin to use it, I have seen amazing progress and increased motivation.

Quan Hongling: I think, when I go back, I will try my best to apply certain formative assessment techniques in my teaching. Worth trying, esp., in China, where some students may consider test as a way of punishment from the Tr.

khangkgcc: It is too complicated in Vietnam when we mention assessment. We are on the ways of changing so different ways of assessments as mentioned have been applied in some universities and colleges. However, still a lot of people use traditional ways of assessment.

silvy andika sari: And one more thing Bu Kun. When I was in UQ, my professor made a chat room where we can share our ideas. And he used several others assessment tools. With a big class, he did that, but most of the students are eager to learn from various sources. While in Indonesia, those kinds of students are very rare. writing journals is a good way to assess our students, but what if the teachers don't have much time to give feedback personally? And the use of journals, if the students don't get feedback from the teachers.

Roundtable Moderator: When assessment is just tests, many teachers feel comfortable with that because it is easy for them. The answers are either right or wrong. Some teachers have a problem of proficiency in English and so don't feel comfortable with any of the alternative assessment types.

Kun Herrini: I agree with all. Getting students used to different things indeed need time and practice, and thus, patience from the teacher, But once they are used to it ...things will be easy..

Quan Hongling: I quite agree with roundtable moderator1/2? that we should build a trust between Ts and Ss.

Kun Herrini: One of the peer-assessment tries I did was the Academic Writing via blog. Everyone can see the writing and can make comments on whichever they like, based on the rubrics we had previously agreed.

khangkgcc: From my own perspectives, I agree that we need to help students understand their roles in assessment. If we want them to them, both Ts and Ss should figure out how to do.

Roundtable Moderator: Khangkgcc: Thank you for your comment. It does take time for teachers and students to learn how to use assessment more affectively. The teachers have their years of experience as students and need to get beyond that and begin trying new things. They need a new apprenticeship of assessment.

silvy andika sari: can anyone give me an idea how to familiarize the assessment tools to students?

Roundtable Moderator 2: To build trust between Ts and Ss, Ts need to make it clear the purpose of the assessment, engage Ss in designing the assessment tool and rubrics, and agree on the ways to provide feedback.

Novi Restuningrum: Hello, everyone. This is Novi in Jakarta.

Phanisara: In large classes, teachers need to empower the students. Teach them ways to assess their own learnings. And then have an assessment consultation scheduled with the teachers.

khangkgcc: The point could be that students need a chance to do what was called assessment. To tell the truth, I think not many people who follow the traditional teaching methods involve students in those kinds of activities.

Kun Herrini: Silvy, maybe we can start introducing one rubric with the students first, then add with another one next time/next activity, and so on. After they are ready, we can combine 2 or 3 rubrics for one activity...

Roundtable Moderator: I agree with Phanisara. This involves the students more in the whole learning process and makes them more active rather than passive learners.

Huong Pham: do you think it's a good idea to ask Ss to write learning journals in a big class (more than 40)? How can Ts have time to read and feedback all journals?

khangkgcc: Introducing the rubric to students and writing journals work very well in my teaching context.

silvy andika sari: That's my question to Pham

Quan Hongling: I once did a final test of writing course by asking students to keep a portfolio, at the end of the semester, Ss shared their portfolio in peers, and comments should be done in peers. Finally I collected students comments and write my own. That was a big class of over 40 students of English majors. Peer comment should also require students to write in English.

Roundtable Moderator: It is a great idea to ask students in large classes to write public journals that can be shared. the rubric for how to assess the journals should be in the front of each one. Teachers can look at a few a week, but students can help by doing peer assessment as well.

Kun Herrini: Prof Quan, I did the same with my class. So, not that everyday we collect students' work and comment on them. However, I could not imagine if one is teaching 4 or 5 classess....

NGUYEN VAN THONG: I agree with all. all ideas are very good and helpful for students. but, the first things we should change students mind in studying, and help them recognise what to learn, how to get and accumulate knowledge for themselves because most students have tendency to depend on their teachers.

Quan Hongling: The point it is a little bit time-consuming if the teacher wants to know students comments in journals/protfolios done by students.

silvy andika sari: Yup, that happens in Indonesia most of the time

Roundtable Moderator: Nguyen Van Thong, I think that by letting students know how they will be assessed, they will be able to do a better job of studying and will study the right things.

Roundtable Moderator 2: If it is for public journals, we could post the journals together with the comments on board so that students will get to read what they didn't get to comment on.

Quan Hongling: I agree with Nguyen Van Thong, no matter waht methods we are use to assess out student, we teachers should try to build a positive attitudes toward test.

Phanisara: Direct questions and answers among teachers and students will provide ways for students to voice their concerns/learning struggles. And then the teacher can comment or suggest different ways of learning that the students can even try on their own.

khangkgcc: What are your aims to read students' journals in large classes? If it is more about encouraging students to write, that is great. Use peer review to help before having the teacher read them.

Kun Herrini: Maybe we as teachers, need to learn to trust students, too. So, we do not need to read all of the students' comments. Just do it randomly.

NGUYEN VAN THONG: but not many students understand what teachers are trying to do for them

Kun Herrini: We can also add an activity - students can get clarification from the peer who gave comment on his/her work..once in a while, of course..

Roundtable Moderator 2 (privately): Li Wei, great to see you come back to the chat. We still have plenty of time for you to post your comments and questions-- Wang Ping

Dung: I'm having 4 writing classes. Class size is from 25 to 35 students. I wonder if I apply peer assessment suggested by Quan. I not only read the students' papers but also their comments to each other. Is it too much for me?

Dung: I'm having 4 writing classes. Class size is from 25 to 35 students. I wonder if I apply peer assessment suggested by Quan. I not only read the students' papers but also their comments to each other. Is it too much for me?

Roundtable Moderator: Nguyen Van Thong, that is why the teacher needs to train the students how to work with assessment that is both formative and summative. They need to learn the role of assessment in their learning and see it as a positive.

Roundtable Moderator 2: Dung, I admire you for that. Your students must have appreciated that. What about their response to the way you give the feedback>?

liwei: yes, i have seen that you have a great discussion. i'm still reading and trying to figure out what you have said.

Kun Herrini: Nguyen, as how the rubrics are, it needs clarification and practice, time and of course, trust between peers and also teacher to students

silvy andika sari: Now, I have another question. If we assess our students for giving information about the students' progress, we can do what you all suggest. But what if teachers have to relate the assessment to grades? And most of them teach their final year students for the national exam. They believe the important thing is that all their students pass the exam. anyone can give suggestion?

khangkgcc: Having 4 classes for how long, if it is in a semester. That's a lot. If i want to teach writing well, 30 students for a semester are the maximum.

Quan Hongling: You don't have to read all of them. You can read everyweek one class'

Roundtable Moderator: I do think that students need to get a quick a feedback as possible. If you wait too long to get the papers back to them, some of the momentum will be lost. Have the peer work done first and given back. Allow the students to change their work accordingly if they want then give both to the teacher.

Quan Hongling: 7 years ago I also taught writing to 120 students ,every week two hours. Then I cooperated with an American teacher, and in each week we just read 1/3 of students' journals.

Dung: I am having 4 writign classes for 10 weeks- 2 classes are in advanced level. The students write essays.

NGUYEN VAN THONG: because some students feel confused with something new that a new teacher do in the class.and student also have time to prepare assignments in the class, so it had better theacher should give a syllabus to students at the beginning of the course which consist of course objective and explains clearly what they need to to, and how to do to get the goal

Roundtable Moderator 2: Ling, I have an idea from what you said. how about we rotate among the classes, when we have one class write, we could have the other classes to read and comment on the writing and the rotation goes on so everyone will get the chance of being evaluated and evaluating others.

Dung: Quan, if I don't read every week, the students won't write. So to encourage them to write, I have to read and discuss common mistakes.

khangkgcc: It seems to me that some think that assessment as "final grades". From my own perspective, I teach students know how to do assessment so that it is good for their progress and outcomes - that means what they acquired after the course. Assessment helps the teacher and students to get that goal.

Roundtable Moderator: Ping, that would only work if the classes were at the same level of proficiency and doing the same work. It is a good idea if that is the case.

Kun Herrini: Silvy, that is a big problem. However I am one of those who believe that if the students have the competence, then no matter what assessment they are facing. One of the suggestions I usually give is concentrate on remedial training one or two months prior to the UAN. Again, if students have the proper competence...then...

Roundtable Moderator: Khangkgcc, that is a great point. Many of us in this chat seem to consider assessment as both on-going formative assessment as well as the summative assessment. I think that the formative is more important to the students' learning. The summative is often more important for the administrative reasons.

khangkgcc: Dung, I asked my students to post everything they wrote in a webpage and give students

more chances to read their friends' writing. And I also ask them to give comments and feedback there. They did the most parts and learned from them. Students need to know how to find their own problems, not just the teacher. They need to learn, not us.

khangkgcc: I do agree with the Moderator.

NGUYEN VAN THONG: hongling! What are you teaching now?

Kun Herrini: Dung and Ping, if internet is handy, combining classes are easy with blog. So the readers will not only be the 'mighty' teacher, but students of all the same subject included in the blog

Quan Hongling: The professor I observed in UQ here also does his assessment by conference/interview. He first has a plan of what to interview, i.e. what information he needs. He tells his students a week ahead of the conference. I observed the bit of the conference - both the Ts and Ss were in a more relaxed way. The teachers triggered and 'secretely" got what he wanted to test his students. Of course his class is of only 14 students, easy to manage.

Roundtable Moderator: Khangkgcc, I agree with you. We need to teach the students how to learn from each other and from real life so that they can continue to learn outside the classroom.

liwei: silvy andika sari, that's a good question, assesment could be used in many ways. And nowadays assesmmnt certainly could not avoid to be used as the way of selecting wonderful students for the Universities. But the national exam should also be improved and focus on student's real ability. The big thing is how to use assessment to prove the student's real learning outcomes.

khangkgcc: Hongling, that way is good too. If we assess students based on what they can do or the outcomes. I think we may think different.

Quan Hongling: Before I came to UQ in Australia, I taught advanced reading to fourth-year university students, also big class, 45 in each class, I had two classes to teach.

Dung: Khang, I discussed with my students about using blogs but they didn't agree so we are using emails instead

Kun Herrini: Agree, LiWei. The Nat Exam should be improved accordingly, too. So teachers are not trapped into the 'teaching for test' approach.

Roundtable Moderator: Dung, perhaps your students did not understand that they can limit who sees their blogs. Maybe thought that blogs were too public. they can limit their blog audience if they want.

Kun Herrini: Dung, with blog, it does not make your inbox full, everyone can see and give comments, teacher can address the general problem once only, and ...ss can see their improvement without opening too many windows/documents

khangkgcc: My students at first disagree to use too. I prepared for them very well how to do it and had some practice. I even went to the Internet services with them. They can do it, however they try not to do that because they are not familiar with changing the ways of learning. Give them more explanations, goals, outcomes, and opportunities.

Quan Hongling: When I teach my postgraduates, I asked them to do presentation, I would design good questions before they did their presentation. Two or three students worked together, as a project work. In listening to their presentation, my job was to ask them more challenging questions. This was also a sort of assessment.

Kun Herrini: Yes, blogs with only your class as the readers and members...

Roundtable Moderator: Prof Quan, I like and agree with your idea. We should be doing more adaptive assessment. That is if students get something right, move it up a level for them and expect more (I+1).

liwei: Kun Herrini:Totally agree. There are some existed language test such as TOFEL and IELTS which based on using the language, maybe we could borrow ideas from those test. What's more, we had to avoid marking system of every point counts.

khangkgcc: Yes, Quan, they learned a lot from that kind of activities.

Quan Hongling: Though at first several classes, I didn't feel quite satisfied with students presentation, for they read everything from the book. Then by asking more challenging questions, they knew how to

interpreting something they got from the text book. And they used their brain to learn.

silvy andika sari: YEs, I agree 100% for bu Kun and Liwei. However, that becomes a problem for teachers because they can't do anything about the National Exam. That's why teachers in Indonesia feel trapped.

Roundtable Moderator: Folks, we are almost at the end of our time. I would like to ask if you want to do a July chat, or should we wait until the beginning of the school year in September for our next web chat?

Roundtable Moderator 2: With a presentation, you could choose to evaluate different things: linguistic (pronunciation), academic (presentation skills,) and social (team work).

Dung: They think blogs are too complicated. Besides, some of the students are from remote areas; they just started using internet, so using emails is already much for them. In classroom, I have a LCD projector and internet-accessed computer. Even though I demonstrated how to do, some students still need more explanation.

Phanisara: National exams obviously don't prove to be very valid and useful. I think there will be changes to that in the future.

khangkgcc: Just one more idea, assessment gives students and the teacher a chance to know where they are to keep moving.

khangkgcc: Where are you teaching, Dung?

silvy andika sari: How about the students' English proficiency in other countries?

Roundtable Moderator 2: What do you want us to discuss for our next webchat?

Quan Hongling: I think, in China, middle school teachers seem not easy to assess their students' performance in their own way, for the National Exam. But, if you are a very open-minded teacher, you still can do something, so as to motivate your students to learn.

Roundtable Moderator: We need to get the National Exam committees to give the teachers the descriptors for the tests so that teachers can prepare students for the test rather than to teach to the test!

Dung: Khang, Quang Trung software city, District 12, HCMC, VN

Quan Hongling: The way you assess Ss in turn will change Ss' attitude to learn.

Roundtable Moderator: Yes, Quan, I agree that there is a link to attitude and assessment.

Roundtable Moderator 2 (privately): Damon, I can't help feeling amused people just ignore our reminder for getting to the end of the chat and going on on their own

Phanisara: Thank you everybody. This has been a wonderful discussion for me. We do have a lot in common in Asian countries. Hope to see you next time.

khangkgcc: Many teachers of mine at Can Tho University have done and introduced the mentioned assessments to other teachers in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam.

Roundtable Moderator (privately): That is true. I take that as a sign of a great chat!!

Kun Herrini: For the coming chat, can we talk about integrating culture in the English teaching?

Quan Hongling: In my point of view, we teachers try to make our profession life more inspiring -- try something new each semester, then our students will feel the same each semester.

Phanisara: That sounds good, Kun.

liwei: I like this idea

Roundtable Moderator: Do you want a roundtable chat in July, or wait until September?

Kun Herrini: Thank you Damon and Ping for facilitating this. And thanks everyone for the sharing...

Dung: I prefer to have another chat in July.

Phanisara: July is good for me.

Quan Hongling: I love the roundtable chat, I do suggest Damon and Ping arrange us another one in July.

Kun Herrini: Anytime. I am home....hahaha...

khangkgcc: At first, both the teacher and students think of reasons for not to change the ways of assessments. Then, people will ask you how to do it. I prefer to have this kind of chat at any time, July is fine to me.

silvy andika sari: Thank you all for giving me suggestions. I asked some questions because I train teachers and most of them complain about what i have asked you all.

Roundtable Moderator 2 (privately): Thank you all for coming and sharing the great ideas with us. Looking forward to seeing you next time!

Roundtable Moderator: OK, we will do one in July. Let's say July 14th (Bastille Day in France).

Kun Herrini: Bye everyone...

Roundtable Moderator 2: Thank you all for coming and sharing the great ideas with us. Looking forward to seeing you next time!

khangkcc: Thank you very much! Khang - Kien Giang Community College, Mekong Delta , Vietnam

Roundtable Moderator: We have one idea to discuss language and culture. How about discussing World Englishes?

Quan Hongling: Hi, silvy andika sari, I am also a teachers trainer, we can share a lot I am sure. Can I have your e-mail address?

Roundtable Moderator 2: Thank you Khang!

silvy andika sari: see you. thanks.

khangkcc: bye

liwei: see you, i will come if i were not on the trip

silvy andika sari: silvy_sari2004@yahoo.com. What's yours?

Quan Hongling: You can ask Ping for my address. See you all in July.

Roundtable Moderator: Thank you all so much for your great participation!!

Quan Hongling: hongling-quan@hotmail.com