



WORKSHOP G

Alternative Assessment for Literature-based Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

As a result of recent curriculum initiatives, there has been an upsurge of interest in how literature can feature in English language learning. The case for literature draws on its value as a resource providing both language input and a context for a variety of language activities as well as its potential for fostering enjoyment and an appreciation of the aesthetic dimensions of language use. The approach advocated is learner-centered focusing on the process of individual meaning-making involving the whole learner. However, too often, laudable curricular goals give way to pragmatism as teachers “teach to the test”. Activities such as acting, recitation, drawing, creative writing and journal writing are relegated to second place as teachers focus on preparing their students for the pen-and-paper tests that often characterize standardized testing.

This workshop session invites participants to explore alternative assessment for literature-based language learning in line with the curricular goals for incorporating literature in the English language classroom. This will include the use of performance and portfolio assessment. Participants will examine the features of these assessment approaches in line with existing curricular objectives as the workshop session attempts to highlight the importance of integrating assessment with instruction. Participants will examine the purpose and focus of assessment strategies, the content to be assessed, and criteria that can be used to assess various types of students’ responses to various genres of



literature. Record-keeping and how records may be used to indicate learner development over time will also be discussed.

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

The process of reading and learning is cyclical and takes place in a sequential manner. It starts from curriculum design to materials development, text selection, teaching and learning and finally assessment. In assessing student text, the yardstick is based on the notion of the learner. One can draw from **Spiro's** role model theory of teaching literature where the same texts may be used but the purposes regarding the use may vary in the classroom depending on the objective, that is, whether it is a resource for language learning, to develop literary competence or for language development in language learning.

The presenter focuses on the use of literature in the classroom, specifically on the Appreciative Reader of literature. The ultimate aim is to put back the reading habit into the classroom. In order to do this, the language competencies which are required to enable independent and fluent reading have to be defined. The language competencies have 5 components namely, the **linguistic competencies, culture awareness, literary awareness, humanistic dimension** and the component that allows for **creativity** and **thoughtful personal responses**.

In this workshop session, participants were told to develop specific objectives regarding language competence. An important feature of the objectives was that they should be defined such that required skill component is observable. From the participants' responses and presentation, the presenter summarized that Literature Teaching allows a diversity of tasks revolving around literature, many objectives could be prescribed and numerous activities could be explored outside the text.

Assessment by notion of portfolio was then recommended in addition to the traditional pencil and paper evaluation. The concept of portfolios (Portfolios present a practical approach) and the advantages were then discussed.

The five advantages are:

- It is **Comprehensive** as the depth and breadth of student's capabilities can be determined.
- It is **Predetermined and Systematic**.
- It is **Informative**.
- It is **tailored** to the needs of the students, curriculum goals and objectives.
- The task is **Authentic** as it reflects teaching and learning.

Participants were reminded to consider these seven questions when using portfolios in assessments of literature:

- (1) What areas of language arts are included in the portfolio?
- (2) What does the portfolio contain?
- (3) How many pieces are included in the portfolio?
- (4) Who selects the pieces?
- (5) How are they rated or scored?
- (6) What happens to the results? and
- (7) How is the portfolio related to other tests such as standardized tests and classroom tests?

The participants were shown examples of portfolio which are practical and manageable by students

Issues/concerns raised by participants and responses from presenter/panelists:

No.	<i>Issues/Concerns raised by participants</i>	<i>Presenter's/Panelists' responses</i>
	<p>Wong Swee Chin (MPIK)</p> <p>How is a portfolio assessed?</p>	<p>Through the product. The images in relation to words. This allows students to develop creative self-expression and experimentation with language.</p> <p>Portfolios foreground students' capability incorporates multiliteracies and multiple intelligences.</p>