

Assessment for Learning

Sample Assessment Materials 1 - English (First Year)

Syllabus area

Personal and Social Literacy
Speaking and Listening

Learning outcome/s

Students will be able to give and receive instructions and directions clearly.

What the teacher intended

The teacher wanted to give each student an opportunity to experience the challenge and fun of making a short oral presentation where the criteria for success were clear and were shared by all.

The methodology would allow for a degree of self-assessment.

The activity would take three to four class sessions but the teacher decided to spread them over a few weeks so as to avoid needless repetition and to give opportunity to re-visit the criteria over time.

Assessment instruments

A series of simple tasks should be sufficient:

- Give a visitor to your school directions to the nearest bus/train station
- Explain to a member of your family how to send a text message on a mobile phone
- Imagine that you are working in an office and are taking two weeks holidays. Leave the voice mail message for your colleagues and callers to your office.

Assessment criteria

- Instructions are clear. Short sentences are used. The tone is confident with no pauses or hesitations.
- Most of the instructions are clear. Short sentences are used. The tone is confident, but there are some pauses and moments of hesitation.
- The instructions are not clear. Sentences are too long. The tone lacks confidence and the instructions have lots of pauses and hesitation.

Using a variety of tasks helps to maintain interest and lets the students see that the same criteria will apply across the different activities

What happened

The teacher and students initially brainstormed the topic: Suppose you had to give instructions/directions to someone, what would be the most important things to keep in mind? How would you know you had done the job well? And so on.

Through this discussion the class group came to decisions on the criteria for success/assessment for the particular task. The teacher helped the students to differentiate between degrees of success.

Preparation for the task, some of which was done in the form of homework, included a short reflection by each student, entitled 'How Will I Know I Have Succeeded'.

In pairs, students discussed their presentations by reference to the criteria and suggested some way/s in which they might improve.

The teacher's reflection

'Spreading the activities over time avoided the possibility of tediousness and repetition.'

'Working in groups of five allowed us to get through a number of presentations rather more quickly. It also lessened anxiety levels!'

'Returning to the criteria from time to time was valuable. In fact, the students refined the criteria as we went along, adding in the use of gestures/body-language as ways of adding clarity to the instructions.'

'An interesting discussion around the question [why is it important to deliver the instructions in this way?] emerged at one point.'

'The students began to develop a sense of the importance of audience awareness – they were giving instructions to a stranger to the area, for example.'

'The students did not find it easy to make specific suggestions as to how they might improve. I had to help here.'