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An ESL Instructor's Guidebook for Reducing Test Anxiety at the Community College Level Through Exploring Alternatives in Assessment

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University of San Francisco

**An ESL Instructor's Guidebook for Reducing Test Anxiety at
the Community College Level Through Exploring Alternatives
in Assessment**

A Field Project Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

By
Allison Demerise Grant

An ESL Instructor's Guidebook for Reducing Test Anxiety at the Community College Level Through Exploring Alternatives in Assessment

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

by

Allison Demerise Grant

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UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

Dr. Brad Washington
Instructor/Chairperson

December 16, 2016

Date

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to decrease test anxiety within ESL community college students by providing their instructors with a guidebook for implementing alternatives in assessment. Chapter one dives right into the problem of ESL students experiencing test anxiety. At the community college level, there are added pressures from family needs, work, legal issues, adjusting to a new culture, and more. Teachers could offset this external anxiety by eliminating test anxiety in their classrooms.

Chapter two outlines much of the relevant literature dealing with the topics of test anxiety, foreign language anxiety, ESL testing practices, ESL at the community college level and alternatives in assessment. The literature review also analyzes the gaps in the literature that this project will strive to fill.

The third chapter includes the project itself, which consists of nine parts. Part one is a sample syllabus for teachers to use as a guide for when to implement alternatives in assessment throughout a semester. The next eight chapters describe the alternatives in assessment in detail and how to use each of them in the classroom. The appendix includes sample checklists, questionnaires and rubrics for teachers to use and adapt in congruence with the alternatives in assessment.

The fourth and final chapter consists of the conclusions and recommendations. This chapter speaks directly to teachers and explores possible ways to use the project in different teaching environments. The project concludes with future areas to be explored within the realm of alternatives in assessment.

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

“I’m really confident in class, but actually, when it comes to exams I just can’t do it for some reason” (S. Gentili, personal communication, September 16, 2016) This sentiment was expressed by an ESL student from Italy named Susanna. She has test anxiety and unfortunately, she is not alone. Susanna is an intelligent and motivated student. She always participates in class and does all of her coursework. However, when it comes to exams, especially standardized tests, she cannot seem to perform well. As she stated, Susanna does not always experience anxiety, only when she is in a certain situation or state. This is why state anxiety is different than trait anxiety. In the article, *How Can Teachers Reduce Test Anxiety of L2 Learners?* Selami Aydin (2007) defines trait anxiety as “a more permanent disposition to be anxious, is viewed as an aspect of personality” (p. 1).

State anxiety, however, is not a permanent feeling, but instead it is only experienced at a certain time or when faced with a specific task. Test anxiety is defined as a higher than average level of stress and anxiety before and during the testing process (Spielberger, 1977). Eunsook Hong and Lewis Karstensson (2002) of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas found that, “State test anxiety refers to the transitory, anxious affect state provoked by a specific evaluative situation” (p. 349). These feelings of nervousness can impede learning as well as have a negative effect on test performance. Unfortunately, teachers are not equipped with the knowledge on how to help students who are suffering from test anxiety (Aydin, 2007). According to the American Test Anxiety Association, approximately 16-20% of students experience a high level of test anxiety and another

18% of students experience moderate-high test anxiety (Driscoll, 2008). This means that 34-38% of students have some form of this debilitating condition. In an average class of 30 students, 10 students could very possibly be affected by test anxiety.

One of the most vulnerable demographics to test anxiety is an ESL student at the community college level. These students are faced with external issues like affording school often while working and taking care of a family. Many ESL students who attend community college are recent immigrants learning English in order to survive (Teranishi, Suarez-Orozco & Suarez Orozco, 2011). The anxiety caused by higher education coupled with learning a second language can make students feel stress even without the added pressure of test taking. With all the strain that can be caused by life in a new country, there is a need for ESL teachers to be aware of the students who show signs of having test anxiety. In my experience, usually the students who actively participate in the class and do all of their homework tend to *choke* or *freeze* when they are given an exam. They know all of the material, but the pressure is too great for them so they cease to function properly when it comes to testing situations. Instructors must also be given the tools they need to help lower the affective filter of their entire classroom as well as focus on those students coping with test anxiety (Aydin, 2007). Alleviating the negative emotions associated with the affective filter hypothesis such as fear, stress and embarrassment, can have a significant effect on students' test taking skills (Du, 2009). It is necessary for ESL teachers at the college level to be equipped with effective ways to lower anxiety and stress due to the increasing levels of pressure that their students are facing when it comes to learning a new language in the United States. It is the teacher's job to produce an environment that fosters their success and inhibits their anxiety. One effective way to do

this is to replace traditional testing methods with alternatives in assessment (Valdi, 2015).

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project is to provide teachers with a guidebook for reducing their students' test anxiety. In the first part, the guide provides teachers with a sample syllabus to show when to use alternatives in assessment during an entire semester. The main focus however; is to provide descriptions of alternatives in assessment for them so they can utilize them in their classrooms. For example the guide focuses on alternatives in assessment such as, portfolios, conferences, presentations, peer assessment and self-assessment. I also explore the concept of co-operative assessment, which allows students to be involved in the creation of their own assessment methods. Alternatives in assessment are a fairly novel idea in the field of ESL, but I hope that it will evolve and turn into a more effective assessment strategy in order to battle test anxiety and increase language acquisition.

The goal for this guidebook is to help teachers create a classroom environment that is conducive to their students' success on tests. My primary audience will be ESL professors at the community college level. Teachers will benefit the most by having a clear guide to lowering their students' test anxiety using alternatives in assessment. The benefits for the students will be that their teachers are equipped with strategies and tactics that will not only help them lower their anxiety but also increase their levels of language acquisition. If ESL teachers are given the tools to reduce pressure and stress in the classroom, it will help all students, not just the ones who are more prone to test anxiety.

Theoretical Framework

The entire goal of this field project is based on one specific theory. Since the 1980's, Dr. Stephen Krashen has made significant contributions to the field of *second-language acquisition (SLA)*. He proposed several hypotheses that have changed the way we teach English to speakers of other languages. Specifically, the *affective filter hypothesis* revolutionized the thinking behind how we learn a language best. In one of his pivotal works, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, Dr. Krashen (1982) explains:

The Affective Filter hypothesis captures the relationship between affective variables and the process of second-language acquisition by positing that acquirers vary with respect to the strength or level of their Affective Filters. Those whose attitudes are not optimal for second-language acquisition will not only tend to seek less input, but they will also have a high or strong Affective Filter--even if they understand the message, the input will not reach the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition, or the language acquisition device (p. 31).

One of the affective variables that he includes in this hypothesis is anxiety. If someone feels any form of anxiety in the classroom, they will not be able to learn properly. If they have this wall built up in front of them and they are so nervous that they cannot perform, then all of the instruction in the world will not help them. The same concept goes for testing. Test anxiety can be extremely detrimental to one's ability to gain competence and acquire the language. Current testing practices do very little to lower students' affective filter. The intentions of tests can be very noble. If they have validity and reliability, the teacher can know that the students are being assessed on what they learned in class. The

problem arises in the form of assessment itself. Even the students who study the most and who usually feel comfortable in class can freeze up at the first glance of a test. This type of Anxiety is exactly what Krashen believes will hinder students from acquiring the language.

Significance of the Project

People from all walks of life come to study in native English speaking countries, like the U.S. whether they want to come here or they need to come here. Due to the influx of ESL students, the demographics of community colleges have changed immensely over the past decade or so (Teranishi, Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2011). The range of courses has widened to fit these new populations of students. ESL classes have grown and expanded due to this demographic shift. ESL instruction itself has also changed significantly in the past few decades. New techniques and methods have been developed to make the learning experience more dynamic. Instead of the old *grammar-translation method*, which is teaching English by simply translating from the first language to the second language, linguists have come up with many more exciting and effective ways of teaching English. For example, the use of humor in the classroom to create a more relaxed environment is a relatively new concept in the field of ESL (Stroud, 2013).

In fact, it was not until 1982 when Dr. Stephen Krashen developed the affective filter hypothesis that teachers began focusing on actively lowering students' stress levels. The affective filter hypothesis states that employing methods to reduce the negative emotions students may feel during the learning process, such as fear and anxiety, will improve their language acquisition (Du, 2009). If students are put under too much stress in the language classroom then they will not be able to function and therefore they will

never effectively learn the target language. ESL teachers at the community college level are now trained to put these new methods and theories into practice in order to give their students the most enriching and valuable learning experiences.

Many students experience anxiety because of archaic testing methods that have seen very little change despite reforms that have taken place in other areas of the ESL field (Rotenburg, 2003). The problem with mainstream testing practices, in institutions such as community colleges, is that the goal of language acquisition is secondary to the results of the test. They show what the students know at the time of the test, but not what they have learned throughout the course. The ways that students are assessed now does not promote long-term language acquisition. Students are taught to *cram* for the test, but once the test is over, they forget almost everything they had learned.

Nahid Sharifi Ashtiani and Esmat Babaii (2007), two educators from Iran argue that “For decades traditional methods of testing have been criticized for saying relatively little reliably about students' ability as well as causing anxiety, which can negatively affect students' recall of learned information” (p. 213). Fortunately, there are alternatives in assessment that can use to create a learning environment that is much more conducive for authentic language learning that will help students remember the material.

In the past, I myself have experienced test anxiety. Throughout my entire K-12 learning experience, I suffered from test anxiety when it came to mathematics. Where as I excelled in other subjects, I could not perform well in my math and science classes. This was not due to the fact that I did not work hard in those classes. On the contrary, I always participated in class, did every homework assignment and even went after school for extra tutoring. However, when it came to the test, I remember feeling dread every time

the teacher handed me a test because I knew that the minute I turned it over, my mind would go completely blank. Back then I had no way of knowing that what I was experiencing was a psychological condition. I also received very little support from my teachers and my school because they didn't have the knowledge or the resources to help.

Test anxiety is a broad issue that needs attention at all levels of education. However, the problem is magnified in the ESL classroom due to the added pressure of anxiety that is generally caused by second-language acquisition. Teachers who have experienced test anxiety themselves will most definitely be able to recognize it in their students. In my classroom, I notice right away when a student is showing signs of possible test anxiety. Speaking to other teachers, they also notice a trend with their students. While some students are able to perform well on the tests, other students who are just as motivated, tend to look at the test and suddenly lose their ability to perform (J. Moran, personal interview, March 27, 2015)

This shows that more focus needs to be put on helping students cope with test anxiety. Due to the stressful nature of the community college environment as well as the intrinsic anxiety that comes with learning a second language, ESL students at this level are the most vulnerable to test anxiety. However, teachers are not equipped with the necessary tools and methods that they need in order to tackle test anxiety in the classroom (Aydin, 2007). The issue also lies in the fact that traditional testing methods do not promote fluency and long-term results among many second language learners (Marefat & Salehi, 2014).

Definition of Terms

Affective Filter Hypothesis- First proposed by Dulay and Burt in 1977 and then later expanded upon by Dr. Stephen Krashen (1982), the Affective Filter Hypothesis is mental barrier or “screen” that students can experience if they are feeling any anxiety or apprehension about what they are learning. This filter can block input and therefore prevent learning and knowledge retention. There are four main affective factors to this hypothesis can hinder the learning process; motivation (or lack of motivation), (negative) attitude, anxiety, and self-confidence (or lack thereof). The affective factor this project will address is anxiety; specifically test anxiety (Du, 2009)

Alternatives in Assessment- A direct reaction to traditional language testing practices that comprise of many different types of assessment such as portfolios, conferences, presentations, peer assessment, self assessment as well as cooperative assessment. Traditional language testing usually involves a set time and place for the students to complete the evaluation of the skills they learned in the classroom. Alternatives in assessment evaluate students throughout the course and allow students to participate in their own learning process and give them more opportunities to truly acquire the language (Derakhshan, Rezaei & Alemi, 2011).

Foreign Language Anxiety or Language Anxiety- Apprehension or nervousness that prevents some students from successfully learning or acquiring a new language (other than their native tongue). They could be good learners in other subjects, they just difficulty in a foreign language situation (Horowitz, Horowitz and Cope, 1986)

Second-Language Acquisition (SLA)- According to Dr. Stephen Krashen (1981),

acquiring a second language differs from learning a second language. Acquisition refers to the communicative competence of an individual as opposed to simply learning about the language (such as the *Grammar Translation Method*). Krashen also acknowledges that second-language acquisition should be almost as natural as first language acquisition, in so far as the learner is exposed to language that is as genuine as possible.

State Anxiety- A type of anxiety that is only experienced in specific situations or states. This means that the individual does not feel anxious all the time, but only when they are put in anxiety inducing situations. The types of situations vary from person to person (Aydin, 2007)

Test Anxiety- Xiaoyan Du (2009) explains that “test anxiety is a psychological condition in which a person experiences distress before, during, or after an exam or other assessment to such an extent that this anxiety causes poor performance or interferes with normal learning” (p. 163).

Trait Anxiety- A more permanent tendency to be anxious. Trait Anxiety is viewed as an aspect of someone’s personality (Aydin, 2007). This is the type of anxiety that we most likely think of when we hear the word *anxiety*. When someone finds it difficult to perform everyday tasks.

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

The main gap in the research lies within the relationship between test anxiety and alternatives in assessment. Both topics are widely explored, but there is little justification or reasoning behind the use of alternatives in assessment. Test anxiety is known to be common in ESL students just as alternatives in assessment are best used in foreign language classrooms. Why then are the two not looked at as cause and effect, problem and solution? This field project will attempt to fill the void of scholarship between these two pertinent issues in the field of ESL. It will highlight the issue of test anxiety in the ESL classroom and then provide solutions in the form of alternatives in assessment. This resource will help community college instructors reduce at least one anxiety-inducing factor in the lives of their students.

It is the unfortunate reality that many students suffer from test anxiety (Driscoll, 2008). Students with test anxiety are often viewed as unintelligent simply because they cannot perform when it comes to examinations (Horowitz, Horowitz & Cope, 1986). Some students can in fact work well under pressure, this is known as facilitative anxiety (Masden, 1982). Other students cease to function the moment a test is put in front of them. This scenario is known as debilitating anxiety. For students studying a different language, the combination of foreign language anxiety and test anxiety can be even more detrimental to learning that language (Marefat & Salehi, 2014). There is evidence of facilitative anxiety, which helps motivate students, but current testing practices tend to lean more towards having a debilitating effect (Masden, 1982). This means that students who suffer from test anxiety cannot get the full experience of acquiring a language.

English as a second language or ESL students are not given the opportunity to properly prove their skills and are therefore left behind or disregarded. Fortunately, there has been much advancement in the field of ESL (Young, 1991). Linguists have helped teachers to become more aware of the pressures that students face while trying to acquire a new language. In the classroom, teachers are much more prepared and skilled in reducing students' anxiety, but little has been done to focus on reducing test anxiety in ESL students (Teemant, 2010). Methods to lower test anxiety exist, but they are rarely implemented simply due to the fact that most teachers are not aware of them (Bista, 2011). Alternatives in Assessment may require more time and effort on the part of the teacher, but they will undoubtedly lower the amount of test anxiety as well as raise the level of authentic language acquisition for all students (Brown & Hudson, 1998).

This review of literature will give an in depth look into some of the most important research that has been conducted in the following areas; test anxiety, foreign language anxiety, ESL at the community college level, ESL testing practices and alternatives in assessment. The review will highlight both what the current literature provides as well as the elements that it lacks. That is where this project will attempt to close the gap in literature and help teachers deal with both foreign language anxiety and test anxiety in their classrooms by implementing alternatives in assessment.

Review of the Literature

Test Anxiety and Foreign Language Anxiety

Much of the evidence of test anxiety and foreign language anxiety is anecdotal. Teachers observe these anxieties manifested within their classrooms quite frequently. Fortunately, the research on test anxiety in the field of education is quite extensive (Iclal

& Onem, 2013), but the relationship between test anxiety and foreign language anxiety is less well known. Studies on test anxiety have been performed since the 1950's. George Mandler and Seymour Sarason first initiated the research and from then on, it spread within the fields of psychology and education. In 1975, Sarason himself went on to create the Test Anxiety Scale, which is questionnaire aimed at collecting information on students' feelings toward testing in general (Marefat & Salehi, 2014). It wasn't until exactly 30 years later in 1982 when Stephen Krashen introduced the Affective Filter Hypothesis that suggested lowering the anxiety of second language learners (Du, 2009).

A few years later in 1986, Elaine K. Horowitz, Michael B. Horowitz and Joann Cope came up with The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). This scale has been an important tool for researchers to calculate the level of anxiety that L2 students feel in their classrooms (Cheng & Liu, 2014). Most recently however, the research on test anxiety and foreign language anxiety has intersected. With the use of both FLCAS and TAS scores, it has been shown that foreign language students are more prone to test anxiety (Marefat & Salehi, 2014). This means that ESL teachers must not only be aware of how their teaching methods could make students more anxious, but also how their testing practices could trigger test anxiety as well (Aydin, 2007).

While research has proved that there is a relationship between test anxiety and foreign language anxiety and that it negatively impacts student performance and second-language acquisition, there is a gap in literature when it comes to finding a solution for this problem. Teaching for test anxiety has been explored (Önem & Ergenç, 2013), but that is where the literature stops. There is little exploration into how alternatives in assessment can lower test anxiety in foreign language students. There is also little

practical advice for teachers on how to implement test anxiety reducing strategies in the classroom.

ESL at the Community College Level

In the United States, and especially California, the rise in ESL programs has grown significantly within the past 20 years (Frodesen, J., Berger, V. B., Eyring, J., Gamber, J. Lane, J., Lieu, M. W. & Stevens, J. R., 2006). Immigration has caused this influx and community colleges have been a resource for people who want to improve their English skills for success in their new home. Many different types of ESL programs have been developed to meet the needs of an array of students. Some students are here temporarily on an F-1 student visa and some are in the U.S. for the long term. Those students might be documented or undocumented immigrants or even refugees (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004). For example, at College of Alameda in Alameda, California, roughly 80% of ESL students are either immigrants or refugees (S. Popal, personal communication, October 8, 2016). These students are faced with significant outside pressures such as family needs, employment and financial pressures, and legal woes. Not to mention the culture shock and adaptation that comes with moving to a new country.

New federal legislation has given special funding to community colleges to help reduce costs for immigrants in need (Teranishi, Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2011). California is one of just 18 states that allow undocumented immigrants to enroll in community college with the lowered in-state tuition rate (Biswas, 2005). The downside of this is that placement tests still determine the amount of financial aid that a student is given. Therefore, more financial pressure is placed on these standardized tests, which only increases test anxiety. Although California is at the forefront of providing support to

immigrant students, there are still gaps in stress reducing practices at the community college level and teachers are not given the resources that they need to lower their students' anxiety (S. Popal, personal communication, October 8, 2016).

It is widely acknowledged that ESL instructors at the community college level are not satisfied with existing testing practices. They argue that the tests do not provide an accurate portrayal of their students' knowledge and learning needs (Chrisman, 2008). At the moment, students are given a placement test prior to instruction in order to determine their appropriate level. In California, the testing method is currently in flux (L.Garcia, personal communication, October 5, 2016). In the past, the chancellor of all California community colleges chose a list of placement test that schools could not deviate from. Throughout the years, these tests have fluctuated. The most recent test has been discontinued as of fall semester 2016 (S. Popal, personal communication, October 8, 2016). Now, the state is developing a common assessment that will be used at all community colleges across California. However, it has not yet been released due to glitches (L.Garcia, personal communication, October 5, 2016). This means that there is now a gap in adequate placement tests for ESL students. If the common assessment from the state is not ready by next semester, colleges will use a test called *ACCUPLACER*. This test is current and valid, but it is completely electronic with no pencil/paper alternative (S. Popal, personal communication, October 8, 2016).

This can be a significant problem for students who are not proficient in technology. Many foreign students are computer savvy, but colleges still need to take into consideration the students who are not computer literate (S. Popal, personal communication, October 8, 2016). If a student does not know how to use a computer and

doesn't speak the language well, this will only increase the anxiety of that student. The computer will not be able to get an accurate depiction of these students' levels. As a result, they will be placed in the wrong class. This issue poses many problems for students, teachers and schools. These standardized placement tests are necessary, but they are potentially anxiety inducing for students, especially for those who are not comfortable with technology (S. Popal, personal communication, October 8, 2016). If community college teachers become more aware of learner-centered, formative assessment, they can curb some of the adverse effects of the inevitable standardized testing (Rotenburg, 2002). The good news is that teachers have the freedom in their own classrooms to choose their own assessment practices and therefore, they can implement alternatives in assessment.

English as a Second Language (ESL) Testing Practices

While many developments have been made in the field of ESL within the past few decades, little has been done to institutionalize more ethical and egalitarian forms of language assessment. The integrative language-testing phase brought radical change through Chomsky's ideas of competence versus performance (Vladi, 2015). This notion factored in different types of language skills and mixed them to provide a more holistic testing experience. This method of assessing productive skills is still used today and even though it has made great changes within ESL, further changes still need to be implemented in order to ensure that testing does not have a negative impact on the learner. Testing practices based on the communicative method have come about recently, but little has been done to put them into practice in the ESL classroom (Vladi, 2015). Ethical and more learner-centered assessment practices could help reduce test anxiety and

promotes more positive feelings toward the test also known as *washback* (Brown & Hudson, 1998).

All too often, language acquisition is completely ignored in current testing practices. There is a significant gap between what students actually know and what their test scores show (Teemant, 2010). Students often experience studying for a test, passing the test, but then promptly forgetting everything shortly afterwards. When learning a second language, teaching and learning for the test is extremely detrimental to language acquisition. For example, if a student only studies for a test, but they never attain full communicative competence, then they will have a difficult time functioning in society. They will know *about* the language, but they will not be able to *use* the language. This is why current ESL testing practices need to be reevaluated.

One of the only drawbacks to implementing more learner-centered assessment practices is the reliability and the validity of such practices (Teemant, 2010). These two test criteria have been emphasized within ESL testing practices since the mid-nineteenth century (Vladi, 2015). Reliability focuses on consistent and steady test results while validity refers to a test measuring what it claims to measure (Brown & Hudson, 1998). Both reliability and validity are absolutely necessary for assessing progress in the ESL classroom. However, because so much emphasis is laid upon these two factors, the well-being of the students has been compromised (Teemant, 2015). The goal shouldn't be to eliminate previous testing methods altogether. Integrated testing has been highly effective and useful for measuring many types of skills and creating a much broader sense of students' language abilities. However, much like teaching methods have become more varied and diversified over the years (Du, 2009), the same idea should be applied to

methods of assessment. These varied forms of assessment are not yet fully explored within ESL research, but they are very necessary in order to help decrease anxiety as well as promote language acquisition.

Theory and Practice of Alternatives in Assessment

Alternatives in assessment are a fairly novel and highly debated concept in the field of ESL. Even the terminology is up for discussion. Should it be called *alternatives in assessment* or *alternatives to assessment* (Derakhshan, Rezaei & Alemi, 2011)? The change in one word can in fact make a difference in the meaning. For this project, the term *alternatives in assessment* will be used because all of the methods that will be introduced are still forms of assessment they are just not the most common or traditional (Brown & Hudson, 1998). The term *alternatives to assessment* is misleading because it automatically equates assessment and testing which is a common misconception. As teachers, we are constantly assessing our students, whether it is formally through tests, quizzes and exams or informally. Informal assessment could be as simple as walking around the classroom and observing students (Ben-Jacob & Ben-Jacob, 2014).

There are many different ways that teachers can gain understanding of their students' achievement without giving them a test, quiz or exam. Some alternatives include, but are not limited to, portfolios, conferences, oral presentations, videos, and peer or self-assessment (Brown & Hudson, 1998). Due to its many forms, assessment can be used in many different ways throughout the entire learning experience. Formative assessment is the process of giving students constructive feedback during the entire learning process, not just evaluating what they know at the end (Ben-Jacob & Ben-Jacob,

2014). By engaging students this way, they will in turn feel more empowered and connected to their own learning experience.

Research suggests that ESL students benefit the most from alternatives in assessment because they have greater opportunities to show that they have actually acquired the language instead of proving what they know about the language in a summative final exam (Tannenbaum, 1996). Therefore, alternatives in assessment not only increase language acquisition, but they can also help students with test anxiety. If there is less pressure on the mid-term or the final exam and the assessment is more spread out during the semester, their stress levels will be reduced (Brown & Hudson, 1998). There are many benefits to alternatives in assessment that scholars have written about throughout the last decade or so (Derakhshan, Rezaei et al., 2011). These methods can be used for all types of learners and all levels (Tannenbaum, 1996). The prominent ESL scholar Ana Huerta-Macias states that alternatives in assessment:

1. are nonintrusive in that they extend the day-to-day classroom activities already in place in a curriculum
 2. allow students to be assessed on what they normally do in class every day
 3. provide information about the strengths and weaknesses of students
 4. are multi-culturally sensitive when properly administered
- (Brown & Hudson, 1998; Huerta-Macias, 1995).

All of these points already eliminate many of the negative factors that are associated with traditional forms of assessment.

Some of the main concerns about alternatives in assessment are due to issues of reliability and validity. However, Huerta-Macias argues that alternatives in assessment

are inherently reliable and valid due to their credibility and auditability (Derakhshan, Rezaei et al., 2011). This means that alternatives in assessment are consistent because they are more thorough which is important for reliability. They are more credible and therefore more valid because students are involved in the assessment process from the very beginning, so they always know what will be required of them. The only significant drawback of alternatives in assessment is that they are time-consuming to produce and administer (Brown & Hudson, 1998). This project is designed to help fill this gap by creating an easy to follow guide with detailed instructions on how to implement many types of alternatives in assessment along with samples they can adapt for their needs.

Summary

The four previous sections highlight the breadth of recent research on each subject. For concepts like test anxiety, there have been many studies over the past 65 years. In 1952, George Mandler and Seymour Sarason initiated research on test anxiety and put the issue on the map. Two decades later, Sarson introduces the Test Anxiety Scale (TAS), which is a questionnaire that measures students' levels of test anxiety. Then, Harold S. Masden's (1982) work proved that there were two types of test anxiety; facilitative and debilitative towards students' test performance. He argued that traditional testing practices and techniques tend to promote debilitative anxiety. Due to significant contributions like these, test anxiety has been focused on in theory as well as practice. Test anxiety is now seen as a legitimate pedagogical concern that should be addressed in schools.

The work of Stephen Krashen has greatly contributed to the field of second-language acquisition. His Affective Filter Hypothesis is the basis of all research that has

ever focused on lowering the anxiety of second language learners. Based on Krashen's theory arose the concept of foreign language anxiety. Elaine K. Horowitz, Michael B. Horowitz and Joann Cope (1986) created the definitive Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale or FLCAS. This measurement tool has been used to assess anxiety caused by learning another language in scholarly research ever since it was first introduced. A study from Iran conducted by Masoomah Salehi and Fahimeh Marefatthat (2014) used FLCAS alongside TAS to analyze the relationship between foreign language anxiety and test anxiety. It shows that both of these factors affect the test performance of foreign language learners.

One population of ESL students that faces anxiety the most is immigrant students at the community college level. Not only are they susceptible to foreign language anxiety, they are also highly vulnerable to test anxiety due to the immense pressure to perform well in order to provide for their families. A very important article that provides insight into the lives of community college students who have recently immigrated to the U.S. is by Robert T. Teranishi, Carola Suárez-Orozco, and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco (2011). They argue that serving the needs of this particular population should be focused on due to their high levels of stress when first entering the country. If their stress levels are reduced and they are well educated, then society, as a whole, will benefit. However, when they are discouraged from achieving success their potential to contribute will not be reached.

The best insight into the community college system comes from the faculty themselves. Interviews with Dr. Luz Garcia and Dr. Sedique Popal provided invaluable information to this project about the realities of testing at community colleges in California. Their experience and expertise helped to fill the gap in the literature on testing

practices at the community college level, specifically for community colleges in the Bay Area of California.

In an article coming from Albania, written by Alma Cenkaj Vladi (2015) language testing is chronicled from 201 B.C. up until now. Vladi outlines each phase in language testing and advocates for a focus on ethics in the future. Annela Teemant (2010) from Indiana University takes the analysis of language testing one step further. Teemant's study takes into consideration the ideas of ESL students about their own testing experience. The idea that the perspectives of students should be considered especially about the way they are assessed is relatively new. The way students feel after a test is known as washback and test creators take this into consideration just as much as other assessment guidelines.

The article written by James D. Brown and Thom Hudson (1998) from the University of Hawai'i highlights the work of esteemed author Ana Huerta-Macias. She wrote extensively about the benefits of alternatives in assessment for both teachers and students. The article uses Huerta-Macias' criteria to justify the existence of reliability and validity of alternatives in assessment. According to Brown and Hudson, the only significant drawback of alternatives in assessment is that they are time-consuming to produce and administer. This project is designed to help fill this gap by creating an easy to follow guide with detailed instructions on how to implement many types of alternatives in assessment along with samples they can adapt for their needs.

CHAPTER III THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Description of the Project

This field project will be a guidebook for instructors at the community college level. However, any teacher who has his or her own class can use this guidebook. The guidebook will consist of three main parts. The first part will be a guide on how to teach study skills and test taking strategies. This will help students prepare for any traditional testing that they have to do. Teachers could spend an entire lesson on these skills and strategies or they could introduce them sporadically as they deem necessary.

The second part of the guidebook will focus on showing teachers all of the options that they have within the realm of alternatives in assessment. This will show case and give detailed descriptions of the many methods that have been developed such as, portfolios, conferences, presentations, and peer as well as self-assessment. I also want to explore the concept of cooperative testing where students construct their own assessment. The methods included in the guidebook can take place over the course of a semester or an entire school year depending on the structure of the class. Teachers will be encouraged to use the assessments formatively rather than in a summative manner in order to give a more comprehensive representation of students' abilities.

The practical element will be the third and most expansive part of this project. The goal is to give teachers an in depth guide on how to implement alternatives in assessment throughout the semester. There will be many different examples on how to create portfolios with students, how to conduct one-on-one conferences, how to productively use presentations as assessments and how to construct peer and self-assessment questionnaires. Another goal is to provide teachers with samples of syllabi

and rubrics for evaluation. All of these methods will be backed up by current research and teachers will be given the tools to create assessment that is both valid and reliable.

Development of the Project

This particular project was initially developed for two reasons. When I first started teaching, I noticed that many of my intelligent and hardworking students were performing poorly on the weekly assessment. At first, I did not realize what the issue was and I was confused and worried for my students. I did not want them to think that they were not intelligent simply because they could not pass a test. Eventually, the real reason dawned on me and it forced me to remember a part of my past that I had forgotten. All throughout my schooling experience, I had a very similar problem to my students but with math. I worked very hard in class, I always did my homework and I even went to after school tutoring. However, none of this hard work could help when it came to the day of the midterm or the final exam. I would feel the pressure and the weight of the test looming throughout the day and when I sat down and looked at the paper, my mind would go completely blank.

I realized that I had test anxiety. Math was like a completely different language to me and I had to work hard to understand and solve the problems. Once I realized that my students were most likely experiencing test anxiety too, I was able to empathize with them. However, I also had to realize that there was another element that they had to deal with; the tests were not in their native language. I knew that had to make it more difficult for them and probably added to their anxiety.

I have spoken with some of the students who were experiencing test anxiety. I was saddened, but not shocked to learn that they placed the level of their English skills on

these tests. I too believed that I wasn't good at math simply because I performed poorly on the exams. This feeling of inadequacy turned me off of math for the rest of my life. This is the last thing that I want to happen to my students, which is why I chose to focus on test anxiety among ESL students and explore alternatives in assessment to help lower anxiety and promote language acquisition.

Since my moment of realization that some of my students had test anxiety, I have learned a great deal about anxiety and how it can affect the learning outcomes of foreign language learners. I found great works of literature and research that proved the existence of foreign language anxiety. This inhibits language acquisition because students do not feel comfortable enough to retain the new knowledge. Apprehension about learning a language coupled with test anxiety can make it very difficult for an ESL student to demonstrate their skills no matter how motivated they are to learn.

As the project progressed, I realized that I wanted to specifically focus on community college students because they can experience the most stress from living in a new country. In the past, I have had contact with ESL community college students but I needed to get an inside perspective on the testing practices that instructors use to assess their students. Unfortunately, I could not find much research about this topic, so I reached out to instructors that I knew from local community colleges. I conducted interviews with them and came away with relevant information about what is currently happening at the community college level.

Alternatives in assessment can potentially benefit all students, not just the ones who are prone to anxiety. Traditional testing methods only show what students know about the language and not their competence or acquisition. In this global society,

students need real world assessment to prepare them for communicative competence when they need to speak English for work, for school and for daily life. Reading various articles about alternatives in assessment only solidified this argument especially when it comes to ESL students. The literature on alternatives in assessment advocates not only for stress reduction, but also for gaining deeper insight into what students are actually learning instead of simply teaching for a test. Instead, a holistic approach is much more effective.

Personally, I have also had hands on experience with alternatives in assessment both as a student and as a teacher. Unlike reading literature, these experiences have given me practical insight on how formative assessment is implemented. Since I first heard about alternatives in assessment, I have been curious about how I can implement them in my classroom. Because I teach at a private language school, it is difficult to try alternatives in assessment due to the inconsistent nature. There are students constantly coming in and out of the school. Therefore, formative assessment is difficult to perform. However, I was able to try cooperative test construction in one of my elective classes. I had the students create their own assessment questions after I had taught them the language. This seemed like a productive learning experience for them and I received positive feedback from the students themselves.

In both high school and university, I have encountered alternatives in assessment even though I didn't realize it at the time. For example, in one class, I worked on final a presentation with a group. At first, I was a little skeptical because I didn't want a large portion of my grade to be effected by the work of other students. However, my fears were put to rest because one element on the project was a self-assessment as well as a peer-

assessment questionnaire. This ensured that everyone was held accountable for his or her own work. Looking back now, I realize that these techniques had a positive impact on my learning experience. With this project, I will expand upon the concept of alternatives in assessment because I want nothing more than to provide students with that type of positive learning experience.

The Project

Matrix Outline

In this project, there will be a total of nine parts. Each part is designed to demonstrate and guide community college teachers of ESL students. The first part is the sample syllabus that has been provided for teachers to use and modify for their own needs. This sample will give practical ideas about when and how to implement alternatives in assessment based on a sixteen-week semester. The next eight parts will consist of detailed descriptions as well as helpful tools for all of the forms of alternatives in assessment that are mentioned in the sample syllabus.

The alternatives in assessment that are outlined are to be used in two distinct ways. The majority of the methods should be used as formative assessment throughout the semester. Second, the group presentations and the portfolios should be used in place of a traditional pencil and paper midterms and finals. As a result, this guidebook will provide the desired effect of lowered anxiety and higher language acquisition:

Part 1: Sample syllabus

Part 2: Student/teacher conferences and a sample checklist

Part 3: Cooperative quiz construction

Part 4: *Kahoot* online quizzes and screen shot pictures of the websites

Part 5: K-W-L charts and an example of a successful chart

Part 6: Self-assessment and a sample checklist

Part 7: Peer-assessment and a sample checklist

Part 8: Group presentations, teacher checklist and a sample rubric

Part 9: Final portfolios and a sample rubric

Part 1

Sample syllabus for a high beginning grammar class

Instructor: Name**Classroom: Room number****Email: Address****Time: Days and time**

Find 3 classmates and write down their email address and phone number.

Classmate 1: Email _____ Phone number _____

Classmate 2: Email _____ Phone number _____

Classmate 3: Email _____ Phone number _____

Hello students! Welcome to high beginning grammar class. During this semester, we will talk about English grammar in a useful and interesting way. I am very excited to work with you this semester. This syllabus will show you the class expectations, the grading system and the weekly schedule. *Please keep this syllabus and all of your class assignments in your class binder. You will need to turn everything in at the end of the semester in a portfolio.* Please do not hesitate to ask me any questions about this syllabus.

Best wishes,

Your instructor

Class Expectations:

1. Please strive to develop your English skills at all times while in class.
2. Please come to class on time.
3. Please stay organized and keep all of your course materials in a binder.
4. Please come to every class prepared with your book, a notebook, your binder, a dictionary, pen, pencil, etc.
5. Please do not text in class and only use your phone for academic purposes and family emergencies.
6. Please do not hesitate to ask me any questions if you do not understand the material.

Grading System:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| ▪ Attendance, participation and effort | 15% |
| ▪ Midterm group presentation | 25% |
| ▪ Final portfolio | 60% |

Weekly Schedule:

| | |
|--|---|
| Week 1: Day 1 Introduction | Day 2 Grammar Review |
| -Teacher/Students introductions -Class Introduction -Icebreakers with classmates -Diagnostic <i>Kahoot</i> quiz | -Communicative activity -Review presentation -Review activities -Running dictation |
| Week 2: Day 1 Simple past | Day 2 Simple past questions |
| -Gap fill with song -K-W-L chart -Reading with grammar -Grammar presentation | *First Student/Teacher Conferences -Give students a list of items for portfolio -Students will sign up for a 20-minute time slot to meet with the teacher. |
| Week 3: Day 1 Adverbs of manner | Day 2 Adverbs of manner |
| -Warm up game -Class material presentation -Controlled practice -Freer practice | -Review material from previous class -Cloze activity -Grammar exercises -Communicative activity |
| Week 4: Day 1 Simple future | Day 2 Simple future |
| -Warm up game -Class material presentation -Controlled practice -Freer practice | -Review material from previous class -Cooperative quiz creation -Prepare for presentations (give rubric) -Choose presentation groups |
| Week 5: Day 1 Gerunds | Day 2 Infinitives |
| - <i>Kahoot</i> based on cooperative quiz -Class material presentation -Controlled practice -Freer practice | -Review material from previous class -K-W-L chart -Video with grammar -Grammar activity |
| Week 6: Day 1 Modals of advice | Day 2 Modals of advice |
| -Warm up game -Class material presentation -Controlled practice -Freer practice | -Review material from previous class -Cooperative quiz creation -Time in class to meet with groups and work on presentations |
| Week 7: Comparative adjectives | Day 2 |
| - <i>Kahoot</i> based on cooperative quiz -Class material presentation -Controlled practice -Freer practice -Time to work on presentations | *Midterm Presentations -Hand out questionnaires and checklists -Peer assessment -Self assessment |
| Week 8: Day 1 Comparative adjectives | Day 2 |
| -Review material from previous class -Cloze activity -Grammar exercises -Communicative activity | *Second Student/Teacher Conferences -Students will sign up for a 20-minute time slot to meet with the teacher. -Teacher hands back conference checklists |

| | |
|---|---|
| Week 9: Day 1 Comparatives | Day 2 Comparatives |
| -Warm up game -Class material presentation -Controlled practice -Freer practice | -Review material from previous class -K-W-L chart -Listening comprehension activity -Running dictation |
| Week 10: Day 1 Superlatives | Day 2 Superlatives |
| -Warm up game -Class material presentation -Controlled practice -Freer practice | -Review material from previous class -Cooperative quiz creation -Cloze activity -Grammar exercises |
| Week 11: Day 1 Present perfect | Day 2 Present perfect |
| -Kahoot based on cooperative quiz -Class material presentation -Controlled practice -Freer practice | -Review material from previous class -Communicative activity -Grammar exercises -Review portfolio items & expectations |
| Week 12: Day 1 Present perfect cont. | Day 2 Present perfect continuous |
| -Warm up game -Class material presentation -Controlled practice -Freer practice | -Review material from previous class -Cooperative quiz creation -Listening comprehension activity -Grammar exercises |
| Week 13: Day 1 First conditional | Day 2 First conditional |
| -Kahoot based on cooperative quiz -Class material presentation -Controlled practice -Freer practice | -Review material from previous class -K-W-L chart -Reading comprehension activity -Hand out rubric for portfolios |
| Week 14: Day 1 Passive voice | Day 2 Passive voice |
| -Warm up game -Class material presentation -Controlled practice -Freer practice | -Review material from previous class -Cloze activity -Grammar exercises -Communicative activity |
| Week 15: Day 1 Review | Day 2 Review |
| -Communicative activity -Review presentation -Review activities -Running dictation | -Review material from previous class -Grammar exercises -Final Kahoot quiz for grammar review -Communicative activity |
| Week 16: Day 1 | Day 2 |
| - Final student teacher conferences -Students will sign up for a 20-minute time slot to meet with the teacher. -Teacher hands back conference checklists | - *Final Portfolios Due -Hand out questionnaires -Self assessment -Course evaluations |

Part 2

Student/Teacher Conferences

These meetings between the teacher and the students are very constructive and useful for assessment. The guide provides a checklist that the teacher can complete after the conference. The teacher can also provide more detailed notes on the bottom of the checklist. After the final conference, teachers will give the checklists back to the students. This procedure will help teachers connect with their students in a constructive way. The best way to assess students in this manner is to hold the conferences three times. Once at the beginning of the semester, the second time after the midterm and lastly during the final week of class.

The first student/teacher conferences should be to get to know each student. Teachers will ask students about their learning goals and expectations for the class. This is the first time that the teacher and the students will connect and get to know each other. The initial connection will lower students' anxiety and give teachers an idea of their communicative competence. The first conference should be as casual as possible. Teachers will take notes after each student leaves. In the middle of the semester, teachers will conduct another conference with students to check in on their progress. This time the conference will be more structured and teachers are advised to use the sample checklist. It is better to fill out the checklist after the student has left as to not make them feel anxious during the meeting. The expectation for this conference is that the students' speaking skills will have improved since the first conference. The final conference will wrap up the semester and give students the opportunity to go over the materials they have collected throughout the semester for their portfolio before they turn it in to the teacher.

Part 3

Cooperative quiz construction

This is a relatively new method in which students create their own quizzes through guidance by the instructor. The idea is for them to come up with appropriate questions pertaining to the grammar or skill that they studied during that week. Students should also provide the correct answers for these questions. The cooperative quiz creation will happen at the end of the week.

Students should be put into groups and use the book to help create *challenging yet fair questions (Explain more)*. The first time students try cooperative quiz construction should be a model and the teacher should provide an example. Sample questions will be provided in this guide. After students provide their questions, the teacher will collect the questions and choose the best 15-25 questions and use them to create a quiz on the Internet game *Kahoot*. For the Kahoot quiz, it is important to have enough questions to create a fair competition for the groups, but to keep it short enough as to not take up too much class time with the quiz. The teacher can modify the questions as he or she sees fit.

Effective quiz questions will challenge students, yet remain fair. This means that the questions should focus on common student errors to create distractors and at the same time keep in line with the learning objectives from that week.

This practice will help students feel in control over their own education. The quiz creation helps them study and reinforce the material. The classroom atmosphere that the quizzes create is active and fun. Teamwork and friendly competition between the students will lower their affective filter and they will feel less anxious and therefore more likely to retain the material.

Part 4

Kahoot online quizzes

Materials needed: Internet access, a teacher's computer, a projector and screen or a SMART board, students' smartphones with Internet access

These online quizzes are a wonderful tool for teachers to engage students and make assessment fun (*WHY??*) *describe the atmosphere it can create in the classroom (paint a picture)*. Students get very excited when they are allowed to use their cellphones in class and then, once they find out it is a competition, they become even more enthusiastic. The first step is for teachers to create an account on *create.kahoot.it*. After that, they can either create their own quiz or find public quizzes that other people have made and use those. Teachers can also search for quizzes that already exist and then duplicate and edit them for their class's purposes.

When creating a quiz, teachers type in questions and the possible answers. For the timing of each question, teachers can set the timer for 5, 10, 20, 30, 60, 90 or 120 seconds. Usually, 10-30 seconds is enough time for students to answer the questions. If the timer is too short, students' will not have enough time to answer the questions, and if it is too long, students will get bored waiting for the results. Teachers can also choose whether to award points for the questions or not. For the first question, it is recommended to not award points to make it a practice question. This tool is integral for the cooperative quiz construction because it is an easy way to create a quiz for students.

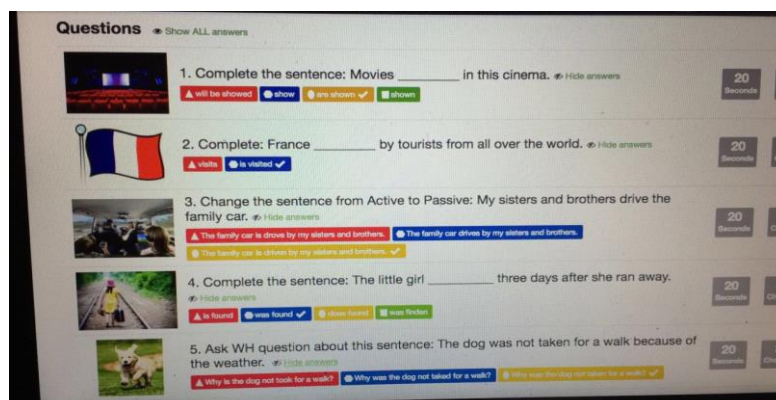
When it comes time to administer the quiz, put students into groups, usually 3 or 4 works depending on class size. Instruct the students that they will use their smart phones for the quiz, but they will only need one smart phone per group. They can use any smart

phone with Internet access. They can use any Internet browser and type in *kahoot.it*. This will bring them to a screen with a box to type in a code that the teacher receives from their end when they begin a quiz on their Kahoot account. Display the code on the projector screen. The student responsible for the group's smartphone enters the number code and then they type in a group name and then the team members' names. Teachers can always delete any inappropriate names.

Once all of the names are entered, they will show up on the projector screen. Next, you can start the quiz from your computer. The questions and possible answers will appear on the projector screen. First the students will have time to talk as a team and then the timer will start to count down. The students must look at the phone and choose the corresponding color that represents the answer that they think is correct. Students must be accurate as well as quick in order to gain the most points.

All the teachers have to do from then on is click next on their computer until the game is over. This game is a very fun way to assess students without them even realizing it's a quiz. They will laugh, yell, and get competitive and work as a team. It will not be long before students start asking to play Kahoot all the time.

Here are some sample questions:



Part 5

K-W-L charts

Materials needed: White board with dry erase markers or a SMART board

K-W-L charts are very useful and convenient assessment tools. The *K* stands for what students already *know*. The *W* stands for what students *want* to know and the *L* stands for what they *learned*. First spit the board into three even sections writing; *know*, *want to know* and *learned* as headers. Teachers must begin with a topic and ask what the students know about it. Write all of their ideas on the board in the first section. Then ask them what they want to know about the topic or what questions they have about it. Then begin the lesson. At the end, go back to the chart and fill in the final column about what they learned. This last portion is critical to the assessment of the lesson because it will give the teacher a clear idea about the knowledge that the students attained during the lesson. It might be a fairly informal type of assessment, but it is very effective and will not create anxiety for the students.

The example provided in the appendix is a real K-W-L chart that was used with ESL students at the high beginning level. First, students' knowledge of the Thanksgiving holiday is written down on the left side of the board under the column labeled *K*. The students already knew some information about the holiday, so this task activated their prior knowledge and gave the teacher an idea about the gaps in knowledge that the lesson will fill. The middle section, labeled *W*, piques the students' curiosity about the subject and allows them to interact more with the lesson. The final *L* section provides students with a chance to review and reinforce the Thanksgiving material they learned.

Part 6

Self-assessment

Materials needed: Questionnaire for self-assessment (sample provided in the appendix)

Self-assessment can be used in many ways but the most constructive is at the end of the course. The checklist provided in this guide will allow students to reflect honestly on their work throughout the entire semester. This can be an outlet for students to advocate for themselves and try to show the teacher their opinion of their work in class. Self-Assessment can also be very useful for teachers. It shows teachers the students perspective and teachers can evaluate whether or not the self-assessment reflect their own opinion of the students' performance.

Part 7

Peer-assessment

Materials needed: Sample questionnaire for peer-assessment, sample peer assessment checklist for group presentations

The purpose of peer-assessment is for group assignments so that students can provide constructive feedback about their partners and their classmates. This also ensures accountability and fairness upon teacher evaluation. If one student did not work with the group or did not do their fair share of the work, other students will be able to alert the teacher in an anonymous manner. The entire group will fill out a checklist after the assignment is complete. Two sample checklists are provided in the guide. One asks students to evaluate themselves as a group and the other asks the rest of the class to give their opinion about the group's performance. At the end, there is space for any additional comments and details about the group work.

Part 8

Group presentations

Materials needed: Sample rubric for presentations and Sample teacher checklist for group presentations.

This form of assessment should be used as an alternative to a midterm test. This is meant to be a larger scale project for students to work on with partners. The teacher should give the students the rubric that is provided in this guide and fully explain what is expected of them. The format of the presentation is the teacher's choice, but it should assess their knowledge of the material that was studied in class. This means that teachers can require students to use certain vocabulary or grammar in their presentations. This method will assess their speaking, writing as well as their general knowledge of the course material.

This will also give students the opportunity to work with other students and show how well they can work as a team. The peer-assessment checklist should be used in conjunction with this assignment in order to ensure all students are held accountable for their participation in the group.

In order to make these presentations more constructive for assessment purposes, a checklist for teachers to complete during the presentations has been provided. This will help teachers record and then create an evaluation for the group. Keeping an organized record of the evaluation will help ensure validity and reliability. The checklist will provide consistency with the requirements and expectations of the presentations. It will also make sure that the evaluation remains as fair and objective as possible.

Part 9

Final portfolio

The portfolio is the seminal work that students turn in at the end of the semester. If it is organized correctly, it can be used in place of a final exam. The final portfolio can even be more productive than a traditional paper and pencil test because it truly shows exactly what the student has accomplished throughout the semester. However, both the teacher and the students need to stay organized in order to make the portfolio a successful alternative to an exam.

The key to creating portfolios is transparency with students about the expectations from the very beginning. Let them know in the syllabus that they need to keep all of their assignments organized in a binder throughout the semester. Also, reminding them periodically exactly which assignments will be included in the portfolio. Teachers should hand out the rubric for the portfolios at the beginning of the semester, so that students are prepared to compile their portfolios. There is a sample rubric included in this guide that teachers can modify to fit their needs.

It is also recommended that teachers create their own checklist for assignments that they wish to be included. They should show this list to the students at the beginning of the semester as well. If a student does not provide a sufficient amount of work for the portfolio due to lack of effort and motivation in the class, then they will receive a low score and it will dramatically affect their class grade. This is a highly unlikely scenario due to the check-ins at the student/teacher conferences. Using these two forms of assessment together will ensure that students stay organized and are held accountable for their work and class participation.

CHAPTER VI CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The gaps in the literature lie within the connection between test anxiety and the need for alternatives in assessment, the benefits of alternatives in assessment for community college ESL students as well as an in depth guide on how to use a variety of alternatives in assessment in community college ESL classrooms. This project seeks to fill those gaps in literature and will therefore bring awareness to the lack of resources for ESL students with test anxiety at the community college level.

This study investigated test anxiety in community college students and provides ESL community college teachers a guide for implementing alternatives in assessment within their classrooms. The idea for this project first stemmed from my own memory of test anxiety. This caused me to be aware of my own students' experiences with test anxiety. I saw in them, what I had seen in myself. I saw nervousness and the inability to perform on a test, even though they had worked hard in class. Just as I had felt the injustice and insecurity of test anxiety, I saw that they felt it too. It can be stifling to have test anxiety and the message that students take away from it is that they are not as intelligent as the other students.

By speaking to ESL students at the community college level and their professors, I realized that their lives are prone to stress due to the pressures of work, family and for many, immigration status. This population of ESL community college students can benefit the most from their instructors using this project in their classrooms.

I also added the element of alternatives in assessment to give the project a practical and tangible element for teachers to implement directly into their classrooms.

Therefore, this study ultimately investigates test anxiety in ESL community college students and provides instructors a clear guide for implementing alternatives in assessment in their classes.

While reading the literature and writing this project, I have found that there is a direct link between foreign language anxiety and test anxiety. If a student is already nervous about learning a language, that will hinder their performance on tests and vice versa. This means that it is very important for ESL teachers to be aware of how their assessment practices are affecting their students.

Inevitably, teachers cannot protect their students from all forms traditional testing, such as standardized tests. Placement tests are necessary for community colleges to place students as well as for determining financial aid. However, because community college teachers have freedom within their own classrooms, they can counteract the negative impact of standardized testing with implementing alternatives in assessment to replace paper and pencil tests and quizzes.

One major benefit of alternatives in assessment is that they are much more varied than traditional forms of assessment. They can come in the form of student/teacher conferences, presentations, portfolios, Internet games, and many others. This project outlines many of these options and provides an in depth guide on how and when to use them throughout a semester. I have also provided a sample syllabus as well as sample rubrics, questionnaires, charts, pictures and more. The purpose of implementing alternatives in assessment like the ones in this project is first and foremost to lower students' anxiety. This will ultimately open up their ability to acquire the language.

Recommendations

The goal of this project is to provide teachers with a practical and detailed option for implementing formative assessment in their classes. Therefore, it is recommended to utilize these methods throughout the semester. Other tools and methods can be added as the teacher sees fit, but the best way to limit students' anxiety will be to focus more on formative assessment rather than summative assessment.

Both teachers and students will benefit equally from this project. Teachers will have a guide on how to implement many forms of alternatives in assessment and students will therefore reap the benefits of their teachers' efforts to reduce their anxiety. By acknowledging students' stress and structuring classes in a way that will lower anxiety is advocating for them and their needs. Teachers should take action in any way they can to help their students who might be experiencing more stress than usual. That is exactly what this project hopes to achieve and it was structured with social justice in mind to help teachers help their students through difficult times.

The optimal way to use this project in the classroom is to follow the sample syllabus that has been provided. However, it is good to keep in mind that the syllabus is just an example and can be used with any class not just a grammar class like the one in the project. The activities mentioned in the syllabus are ideas for class time use, but the most important aspect of this sample syllabus is the structure of the implementation of the alternatives in assessment. This provides the appropriate timing of the Kahoot quizzes, cooperative quiz construction, K-W-L charts, presentation, conferences and the final portfolio. The detailed descriptions of the various alternatives in assessment given in the project are there to help teachers implement each one of them in their classrooms.

Fortunately, alternatives in assessment are useful for any level and any type of ESL class. They work especially well for adult students who can handle a certain amount of freedom and responsibility in their own learning process, but teachers can modify any of these methods for their own needs. For elementary or beginning levels, teachers can assess students' knowledge with pictures. For example, they can give students a paper with different pictures of vocabulary they have learned and can ask the students to draw a circle around certain items. This works well for fruit and vegetable vocabulary, animals, transportation, body parts and many other beginning vocabulary items. Kahoot quizzes can also be used for beginners using pictures and simple sentences. Cooperative quiz creation might be too overwhelming for lower level students, but with sufficient examples and scaffolding from the teacher, it could work for them as well. The conferences, presentations, K-W-L charts, self and peer assessment can be great assessment tools for any level. The teacher need only adapt them for their particular class.

It is highly recommended that teachers also use and adapt the sample rubrics, questionnaires and checklists for their classes. Using these samples in congruence with the alternatives in assessment will help keep teachers organized, and ensure reliability and validity. These can be used for any class, not just a grammar class like the sample syllabus. Speaking and listening classes can focus more on the presentations and reading and writing classes can focus more portfolios.

Due to time restrictions, this project was not able to explore a few elements that I was hoping to incorporate. Originally, I wanted to put in a test anxiety questionnaire for teachers to give to their students at the beginning of the semester. However, I decided not to include anything like that because I did not want to potentially raise students'

awareness of their anxiety, but instead focus on reducing it subconsciously. I also would have liked to focus on eliminating test anxiety by teaching students test taking strategies. However, as the project evolved, I realized that I wanted to target test anxiety by focusing more on implementing formative assessment rather than focusing on summative assessment. However, I would have liked to include a study skills portion to include at the beginning of the semester. Ideally, this would have been a communicative and collaborative activity for students to share their own study skills with the entire class. This is an idea that other teachers can explore if they desire, but ultimately, it did not fit in with the project.

Lastly, an area that I would have explored if I had had time is the concept of electronic portfolios or e-portfolios. The idea of automating the portfolio process is appealing because of the elimination of paper waste. However, there are not many programs that I found which could be used with the intention of formative assessment. There are programs such as *Blackboard* or *Canvas* that are in a similar vein, but I did not have the time to research their uses. There could also be problems for students who are not as familiar with technology as other students. The whole point of this project is to reduce anxiety and not cause it by adding any complicated elements.

Ultimately, the goal of this project is to make implementing alternatives in assessment less daunting and less labor intensive for teachers. By providing these resources for teachers of ESL at community colleges, their students will inherently benefit and their anxiety will lessen. This project could not be more timely and poignant due to the current political uncertainty for ESL students and instructors.

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APPENDIX

Sample checklists, rubrics, questionnaires and pictures for teachers to use with the
alternatives in assessment in the guidebook

Sample student/teacher conference checklist

Conference checklist for _____ (Name) _____

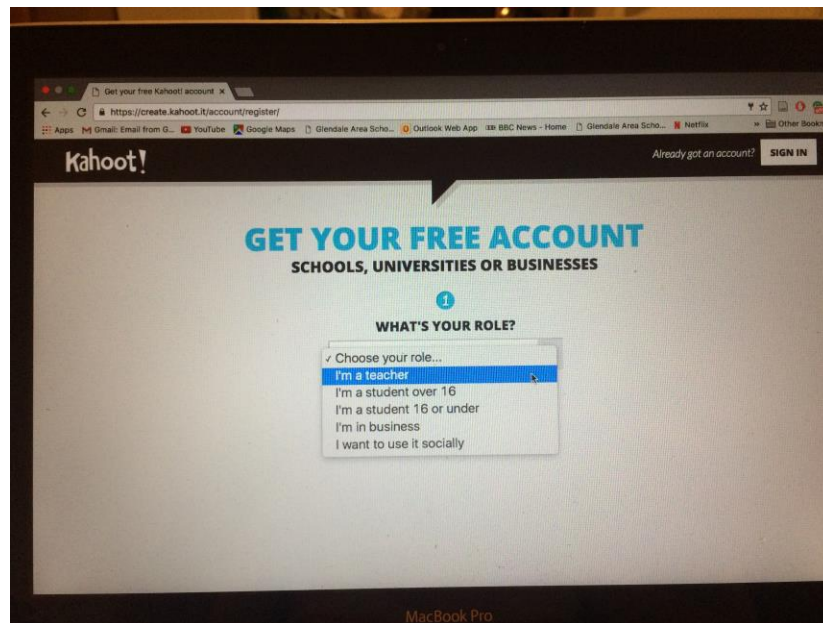
Questions:

Notes:

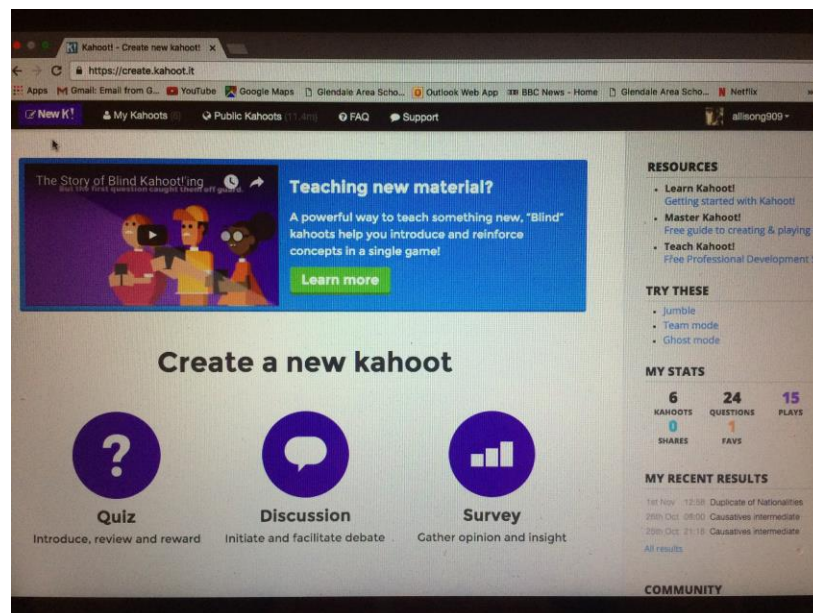
| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Did the student keep the appointment? | | |
| Did the student come on time? | | |
| Did the student greet you when they came in? | | |
| Did the student come prepared? | | |
| Was the student able to express him or herself? | | |
| Was the student able to understand you? | | |
| Did the student ask questions about the class material? | | |
| Did the student seem receptive to any constructive advice? | | |
| Did the student take notes about what you said? | | |

Feedback for _____ (Name) _____

Kahoot website pictures



This is the sign up page for <https://create.kahoot.it/account/register/>



Close K! Quiz Ok, go

Title (required) 95

Description (required)
A #math #blindkahoot to introduce the basics of #algebra to #grade8

Cover image
Add image
or drag & drop

Visible to Everyone Language English Audience (required) Please select...

Credit resources

Intro video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvNR4SR3u08>

MacBook Pro

Once you have created an account, you can create a new *Kahoot* quiz.

Close K! Question 1 Next

Question (required)
What is the subject of this sentence: My best friend loves chocolate.

Time limit 20 sec Award points YES

Media
Add image Add Video
or drag & drop image

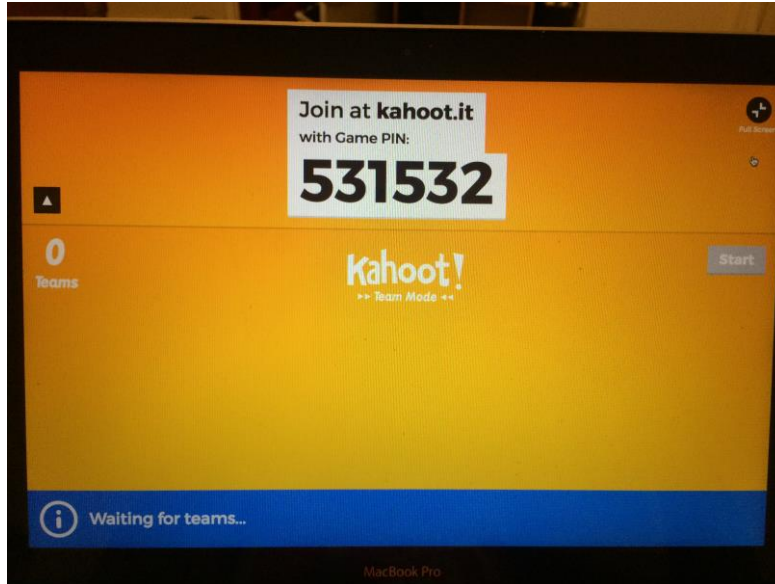
Answer 1 (required) chocolate Answer 2 (required) loves

Answer 3 My Answer 4 My best friend

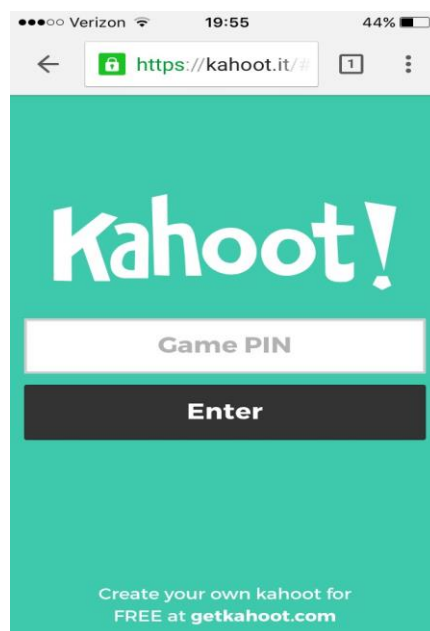
Credit resources

MacBook Pro

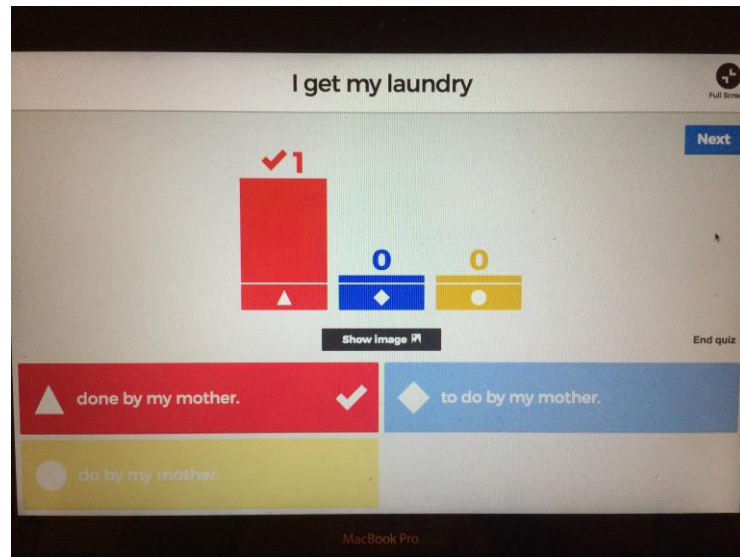
To create a quiz, type in a question, set the time, and type in the possible answers. You can choose to award points or not and you must make sure to check the correct answer.



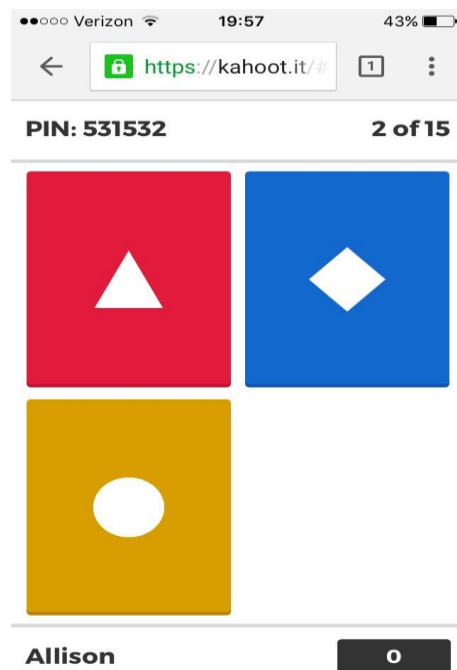
To play the quiz, the teacher will have a game code number on their computer screen.



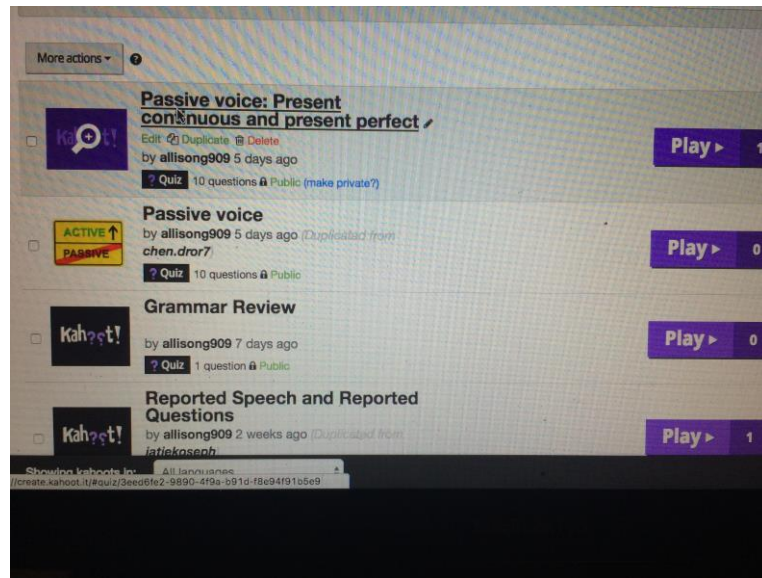
The students will have a box to enter the code on their smart phone screen (above right) once they type *kahoot.it* into their browser.



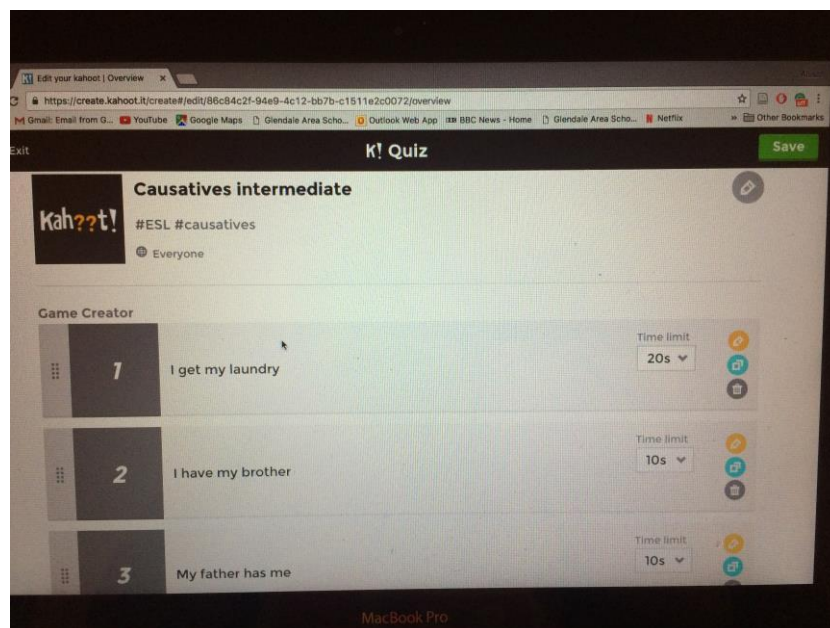
Once the quiz is started, the questions and the answer options will only appear on the teacher's computer screen.



The students will have to read from the projector and then choose the appropriate color that corresponds with their answer on their smart phone screen.



For editing a quiz, teachers go to *my quizzes* on the upper left hand corner of the home page and then clicking *edit* on the desired quiz.



Once you are on the edit page, you can then edit each individual question by clicking the orange pencil symbol.

Sample K-W-L chart

| Thanksgiving | | |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| K | W | L |
| turkey | Why is it celebrated? | 1620 / Plymouth |
| Pilgrims | Religion? | No turkey! |
| Mayflower | Other food | Harvest |
| eating | Why turkey | Squanto |
| Fall | Native Americans | Puritans |
| Family | Only in USA? | religious freedom |
| | | colonies |
| | | Canada's Thanksgiving |

*This particular chart was written on a SMART board, but it can also be done on a white board or even a chalkboard.

Sample questionnaire for self-assessment

Directions: Please read the statements below and put a ✓ in the box that best describes your performance in class.

In class I...

| | Always | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |
|--|---------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Asked good questions | | | | | |
| Raised my hand and gave answers | | | | | |
| Worked with other students | | | | | |
| Stayed focused on my work | | | | | |
| Used a dictionary to look up words | | | | | |
| Completed my homework on time | | | | | |
| Came to class prepared | | | | | |
| Kept all my papers organized | | | | | |
| Prepared all of my portfolio materials | | | | | |

Any other comments:

Sample questionnaire for peer-assessment

Directions: Please read the statements below and put a ✓ in the box that best describes your group's performance during the presentation. And remember, please be honest, your classmates will not read this.

For the presentation we...

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree or disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Worked well together as a team | | | | | |
| Participated equally | | | | | |
| Worked on different parts of the presentation | | | | | |
| Met outside of class to work on the presentation | | | | | |
| Communicated well as a group | | | | | |
| Spoke equally during the presentation | | | | | |
| Stayed within the time limit | | | | | |
| Were happy with the overall presentation | | | | | |

Any other comments:

Sample rubric for presentations

| Points | Team participation | Time | Volume | Presentation skills | Content |
|---------------|---|--|---|--|--|
| 90-100 | All members of the team say something meaningful and on topic. | Presentation as a whole is of appropriate length as indicated by the teacher. | All students (the audience) can hear all the time. | The team as a whole doesn't read presentation at all and makes eye contact. | Always uses language appropriate for level and is easily understood. |
| 75-89 | Most members of the team say something meaningful and on topic. | Presentation as a whole is a bit longer or shorter as indicated by the teacher. | All students (the audience) can hear 75% of the time or more. | The team as a whole doesn't read presentation too much and makes adequate eye contact. | Often uses language appropriate for level and is easily understood. |
| 60-75 | Some members of the team say something meaningful and on topic. | Presentation as a whole is considerably too long in length as indicated by the teacher. | All students (the audience) can hear between 65% and 75% of the time or more. | The team as a whole mostly reads presentation and makes little eye contact. | Sometimes uses language appropriate for level and is easily understood. |
| 40-59 | Only one member of the team speaks. | Presentation as a whole is considerably too short in length as indicated by the teacher. | Students (the audience) often can't hear speakers. | The team as a whole reads presentation the entire time and makes no eye contact. | Rarely uses language appropriate for level and is not easily understood. |

Adapted from: Teacher Web

<http://teacherweb.com/ON/CRMarchant/mrv/Speaking-and-Presentations.pdf>

Sample peer assessment checklist for group presentations

Directions: Please watch the presentation and fill this checklist out after the presentation is over. Put a ✓ in the box if you agree with the statement. This will help your classmates to improve their presentation skills.

| | |
|---|--|
| I saw all of the group members participating and speaking. | |
| I could hear everyone clearly. | |
| I could see the slides clearly and read the information on the slides. | |
| I could understand what they said and presented about. | |
| The presentation was not too long. | |
| The presentation was not too short. | |
| I learned something new or reviewed something that I learned in class. | |
| The group made eye contact with us and did not just read from the slides. | |
| I enjoyed the presentation. | |

Any other comments:

Sample teacher checklist for group presentations

| | |
|--|--|
| The group seems to work well together and collaborates during the presentation. | |
| All group members are participating and speaking equally. | |
| The presentation does not go over or under time. | |
| I am sitting in the back of the classroom and I can hear all the students clearly. | |
| The students know the material and they do not read from the slides very much. | |
| They make eye contact and have good body language during the presentation. | |
| Students demonstrate that they understand the requirements of the presentation. | |
| They use language that is appropriate for their level. | |
| The group taught the class something new and interesting. | |
| The overall presentation was a success. | |

Additional comments:

Sample rubric for portfolios

| Points | Required items | Concepts | Overall Presentation |
|---------------|---|--|---|
| 90-100 | All required items are included. | Items clearly demonstrate that the desired learning outcomes for the term have been achieved. The student has gained a significant understanding of the concepts and applications. | Items are clearly introduced, well organized, and creatively displayed, showing connection between items. |
| 75-89 | Most of the required items are included. | Items clearly demonstrate most of the desired learning outcomes for the term. The student has gained a general understanding of the concepts and applications. | Items are introduced and well organized, showing connection between items. |
| 60-75 | About half of the required items are included. | Items demonstrate some of the desired learning outcomes for the term. The student has gained some understanding of the concepts and attempts to apply them. | Items are introduced and somewhat organized, showing some connection between items. |
| 40-59 | A significant number of required items are missing. | Items do not demonstrate basic learning outcomes for the term. The student has limited understanding of the concepts. | Items are not introduced and lack organization. |

Adapted from: Drs. Cavanaugh Education Technology
<http://drscavanaugh.org/workshops/assessment/sample.htm>