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***Supporting Japanese First-year Collegiates' Confidence and English Fluency through Tri-sectional, Multi-modal Formative Assessment***



The classroom-based project presented in this talk included the development of clear and concise instructions, an analytic rubric as well as practice and testing materials to assess students' speaking abilities. The speaking tasks consisted of three parts: *reading aloud*, *describing a picture*, and *giving your opinion*. As an extension of an ongoing departmental project originally focusing on second-year pharmacy students, the researchers incorporated eleven first-year student groups from all departments. Six of the groups were offered the module face-to-face, while the other five groups received instruction, practice tasks, and feedback online.

According to Xiao & Yang (2019), English language teachers should give students appropriate guidance, which includes instructing them on learning strategies, activating their metacognition, and enhancing their self-efficacy. The aim of the current project was to improve students' confidence and production of logical arguments by implementing a formative speaking assessment module that provided them with opportunities for advancement through succinct instruction, insight into strengths and weaknesses / self-evaluation, and instructor feedback. The research questions included: 1) To what extent does the use of the assessment tool improve first-year students' comprehensibility in English? 2) To what extent does classroom instruction help improve student confidence?

This study took a mixed-method approach where data from student grades and surveys were collected and analyzed. To obtain a baseline of students' speaking abilities prior to any formal instruction and gain insight into the assessment process, one class was chosen by each instructor and asked to record themselves describing a picture. A comparison of the baseline assessment and finals resulted in improvement following the introduction of rubrics and explicit instruction. The remaining two aspects also showed a distinct rise both in grades and comprehensibility between midterms and finals. The survey results showed that

across departments, students' confidence in their abilities to express themselves in English increased over the semester.

*Keywords: Formative assessment, English fluency, classroom-based project*

### **Biodata**

James Herbach is a graduate of the University of Phoenix in the United States, with a MAED and a specialization in curriculum design and adult education. His teaching career spans 20 years with the past 10 years at the university level. He is presently employed as a lecturer in the Language and Communication Research Center at the University of Shizuoka, Japan.

Kinsella Valies is an adjunct professor at the University of Shizuoka in Shizuoka, Japan. Kinsella received her Master's in Applied Linguistics from Mary Immaculate College / University of Limerick. She is active in several international educational organizations, volunteers at conferences and is the Research Coordinator at JALT Peer Support Group. Her research interests include assessment and TBLT. Her most recent publications include "Speaking assessment platforms: online synchronous testing vs. recorded video submissions, IATEFL TEASIG Newsletter, 2021."

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