
Feature Article

Assessment Rubric and Methodology for Quality Classroom Participation

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The purpose of this paper is to compare a quality-based classroom participation rubric and methodology participation assessment (OEQP) against standards found in the critical literature on the topic. Critical literature on classroom participation was analyzed for definition of topic, and problems of systematization and assessment, among other relevant items. The studies were separated for relevance to classroom participation in the English as a foreign language classroom. A taxonomy of classroom participation was created from the relevant literature. The rubric and methodology were weighed against the taxonomy. It was found that the OEQP rubric and methodology, and their presentation, validated against the taxonomy across dimensions of quality output, systemization of use, inclusiveness, opportunity, motivation, and bias avoidance. The OEQP rubric and methodology gives an example of how to create a quality-based participation rubric, include its provisions to students, and recognize and assess participation in the language lab.

本稿の目的は、関連論文にみられる授業参加評価基準の問題と「実質的授業参加規程・方法論」(OEQP)の比較である。授業参加に関する先行研究をトピックの定義、他の関連要素のなかでも体系化と評価の問題について分析した。先行研究を外国語としての英語授業に関連したものに絞った。関連文献から授業参加項目の分類表を作成し、授業参加規程・方法論と考え合わせた。OEQPによる規程・方法論とその授業による実施結果は実質的アウトプット使用の体系化、全員参加、機会均等、モチベーション、平等性といった問題の項目すべてに有効であることを示した。OEQP規程と方法論により、実質的授業参加項目作成法、学生への事前予告法、LL教室での参加の把握と評価法の例を示すことができる。

Certain English as a Foreign Language (EFL) full-time professors disagree on the credibility of classroom participation assessment in conversation classes at a large public university in western Japan where I teach. This prompted my

review of classroom participation evaluation guidelines and methodology and implementing agreed-upon strategies. The participation grade in my classes for first- and second-year compulsory EFL speaking and listening classes is 30% of the final grade. With the stakes that high, standards for classroom participation grading need to be scrutinized and chosen carefully. In 2009, a classroom participation rubric and methodology was created for these types of classes, with items matched to quality points in order to assess students' observable effort towards quality performance (OEQP).

This paper will compare the current OEQP rationale that was developed over several years versus methodology found in existing literature on classroom participation. The comparison will begin by defining classroom participation. It will then examine how participation has been systematized and assessed in the past. After that, the need for participation grading will be argued, including prevising—informing the students ahead of time that their participation will be assessed—and student feelings on the matter. Then the research discussion will move to the importance of accurate participation assessment. From that point a participation-based assessment will be taxonomized from the literature. The evolution of the OEQP participation rubric will then be described over three periods of time and briefly discussed individually. Finally, the mature iteration of the OEQP rubric and methodology will be discussed and summarized.

What Is Classroom Participation?

Before defining classroom participation it is useful to look at the nature of the non-major EFL Japanese university classrooms that were the breeding grounds of OEQP—the subject participation rubric in this paper. Before the development of the OEQP rubric, the mandate to assess participation came from a Japanese university administration in the late 1990s. Students in those early oral communication classes I taught began receiving points for raising their hands and answering questions with any answer; that is, short or long, grammatically correct or not, using grammar and vocabulary from the day's lesson or not. Students told one another “just raise your hand and get a point.” Truculent point-fishing began, with those same extroverted students distracting the class—often in Japanese—

when not point fishing. Shyer students suffered. This began the quest to create a system to account for quality output; to safeguard opportunities for introverts; and account for the holistic nature of participation; as reflected in the student's activity, and the student's self-governance, as more than volunteering an answer or keeping quiet, when another student is talking.

One of the problems with classroom participation results from the confusion over its multiple definitions. In the literature, participation in the foreign language classroom has been defined using such various behaviors as good attendance, staying awake, doing extra work, and playing the role of teacher (Rogers, 2011). Tsou (2005) defines participation as speaking, listening, reading, writing, body language, and physical movement. Spratt (cited in Cheng, 1999) studied students in Hong Kong and included taking part in language games and listening to other students as part of her 12 points related to classroom participation. Many of the definitions in this brief overview of classroom participation are unfinished, insufficient, lacking in accuracy, or contradictory.

The Need For Classroom Participation Assessment

For the purposes of understanding classroom participation through the lens of quality performance, previous research on this topic must be sorted for relevance. As mentioned above, classroom participation generally has been broadly defined. However, there is support for the role of participation in student assessment. In their study on learning, Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (1999) argued that assessment must go beyond mere testing, to make student thinking transparent and foster feedback. Mello (2010) studied the pros and cons of the nature and various types of classroom participation in different countries, including Japan, and cited previous studies saying there was “no significant relationship between levels of participation and test scores” (p. 77). Recurring formative assessment—the teacher appraising student performance while doing a task—helps make students' thinking observable to their teacher, which is important as students come into a class with course materials and methods preconceptions unknown to the teacher (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking, 1999).

If assessing classroom participation is necessary students' understanding

and feelings about classroom participation, its meaning, and its assessment should also be taken into account. There is evidence that informing students of what participation is, when and how often it is gauged, and how it affects their grades, prepares them for active involvement in class (Tsou, 2005; Bean & Peterson, 1998; Zinn et al., 2011; Cabrera et al., 2001). In addition, Zinn et al. (2011) looked at the differences between student and faculty survey responses on performance and effort in final grades and showed students wanted those two factors to be graded with more weight. Ely (1986, cited in Tsou, 2005) reported on language class discomfort, risk taking, and sociability where output proficiency was assessed; he supports this by stating that “oral correctness was influenced by classroom participation” (p. 46). Cognitive evaluation theory advises rewarding students, pointing out that intrinsic motivation is strengthened by perceived ability or individual spirit (cited in Eisenberger and Cameron, 1996). These works support the idea that quality output is a property of classroom participation that affects students and thus should be assessed.

Assessment Fairness and Accuracy

If participation is to be assessed, it should be fair and accurate. Given the time constraints of orally testing classes of 30-40 students, individually, in pairs, or in groups, the full breadth of student knowledge and the skills needed to discuss a topic in depth cannot be determined. However, in speaking and listening classes, it is the students’ oral performance that is mainly being assessed. Outside of regular oral tests throughout a semester, it is difficult for a teacher to know where a student’s interlanguage skill level lies between those tests (Mello, 2010; Parker et al, 2011).

Key findings in related literature include participation prevising and how it will be assessed. Prevising communicates how the teacher will implement the assessment rubric. It includes fairness of point rewards, when points are rewarded, task weight of difficulty and the act of the point reward.

Delving into the details of the extensive literature search is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that evidence from numerous researchers was taken into account as the OEQP rubric was eventually constructed and refined. The major points that should and should not be included are taxonomized, outlined,

and referenced in Table 1. What follows is the experiential observation in the classroom of how and at what points the development of the OEQP map to the taxonomized elements from the literature.

Table 1
Classroom Participation Assessment Taxonomy

	Assessment Should	Assessment Should Not
include a rubric (Rogers, 2011; Lyons, 1989).	avoid bias and unconscious favoritism (Black, 1995).	be subjective when assessing participation and giving feedback (Shindler, 2003; Morita, 2004; Black, 1995; Bean & Peterson, 2002; Burrell, 2009; Lyons, 1989; Mello, 2010; cited in Christensen, et al., 1995).
include a taxonomy of difficulty of questions posed relative student utterances (Bean and Peterson, 2002).	avoid ascribing identities on students (Morita, 2004).	penalize students or take points away (Bransford, 1999).
be based on communication skills (Dancer and Kamvounias, 2005; Black, 1995).	be included in class guidelines or syllabus (Bean & Peterson, 2002; Weimer, 2012; Tsou, 2005; Zinn et al., 2011; Cabrera et al., 2001; Black, 1995; Burrell, 2009; Carbone, 1999; Lyons, 1989; Jones, 2008).	lessen teacher ability to teach and interact with students (Shindler, 2003).
provide a governor against strong-willed students from dominating (Bean and Peterson, 2002; Shindler, 2003; Dancer and Kamvounias, 2005).	employ continuous assessment (Dancer and Kamvounias, 2005).	penalize students' personalities, learning styles, or cultures (Shindler, 2003).
monitor progress (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking, 1999).	be consistent in grading (Bean & Peterson, 2002; Burrell, 2009; Shindler, 2003).	
be clear and detailed enough to account for the entire nature of the classroom environment, and the importance of quality performance, but succinct enough to quickly remind the students (Tsou, 2005; Burrell, 2009; Shindler, 2003).	include diverse participation structures (Patchen, 2005; Lyons, 1989).	
be obvious when quality-based participation points are being assigned (Boniecki and Moore, 2003).	account for quality, completeness, and timelines of task, as well as attendance (Jones, 2008).	
carefully keep records (Burrell, 2009; Carbone, 1999; Shindler, 2003).	include cold-calling to foster opportunities for shy students to answer (Jones, 2008; Morita, 2004; Naraian, 2011).	
assign points in a dispassionate manner (Bean & Peterson, 2002; Burrell, 2009).	have a point ceiling to dissuade point-fishing (Boniecki and Moore, 2003).	

The Conception and Evolution of the OEQP Participation Rubric

This paper will now look at the steps from conception to maturation of the OEQP participation rubric and methodology, the extent to which the OEQP maps to those points from the literature, and a discussion of outcomes. The OEQP later matured into a four-point rubric. The points include, speaking loud and clear enough so the teacher can understand you; using only English; speaking in full sentences, and; successfully attempting to accurately use new words and phrases the teacher has modeled. The OEQP from its nascent stages until maturity has been used in university first- and second-year compulsory EFL speaking and listening classes. Classes have included 24-40 students of varying majors. The rubric has been used to assess students' interlocation with classmates in pair and group work, and with the teacher in cold-calling and volunteering answers.

What follows is a description of the action research from 1998 to present. Blocks of time will contain descriptions of the changes that were implemented, followed by observations on their effectiveness and points from the steps of the OEQP evolution that map to the taxonomy.

1998-1999: First Exposure to Participation Assessment

The year 1998 marked the beginning of the participation assessment methodology that later became OEQP. Classroom participation was authorized to be part of the students' final grade for oral English classes. At this point I decided to make the class syllabus bilingual: English and Japanese. The syllabus contained fundamentals of what is expected of the students during class participation (Table 2). These included showing the instructor that the students were listening whenever the instructor spoke, using only English in class, and actively participating in all class activities.

From this date onward, individual students read the Japanese portions of the syllabus aloud in front of the class to begin each semester. The grading of participation was achieved by weekly observing and grading individual actions, without an objective rubric. Also, from this date students were allowed to calculate their own mid-term grades, with a copy of the teacher's grade sheet.

Table 2

1998 Syllabus-borne Participation Rubric

Good participation is...

- Showing the instructor you are listening whenever he speaks. (stop talking, make eye contact, listen)
 - Using only English in class (don't cheat yourself by using Japanese in class. In class is English time, so use only English)
 - Actively participating in all class activities (when the instructor says to begin an exercise, begin quickly, when you are finished with one partner, find another partner quickly)
 - If you have a question, ask the teacher in English, don't ask another student in Japanese, and never pretend you understand if you really don't—ask the instructor)
-

When the calculations were completed some students whose grades were adversely affected by a low participation score were noticeably surprised by the effect participation had on their grades.

Initial observations

- The students heard and understood the contents about participation in their own language.
- The participation rubric was succinct and easily referable (Table 2), but direct referencing to it was largely ignored by teacher and students.
- Students were at the mercy of the teacher's moods and whims.
- Continuous grading (Dancer and Kamvounias, 2005) and record-keeping (Burrell, 2009; Carbone, 1999; Shindler, 2003) of the participation methodology combined with mid-term grade calculations made an emotional impact on the students.
- Syllabus prevising and referring caused students to review the syllabus (Bean & Peterson, 2002; Weimer, 2012; Tsou, 2005; Zinn et al., 2011; Cabrera et al., 2001; Black, 1995; Burrell, 2009; Carbone, 1999; Lyons, 1989; Jones, 2008).
- Nascent participation fundamentals were included in the syllabus (Bean & Peterson, 2002; Weimer, 2012; Tsou, 2005; Zinn et al., 2011; Cabrera et al., 2001; Black, 1995; Burrell, 2009; Carbone, 1999; Lyons, 1989; Jones, 2008).

2000-2006: The Move Towards OEQP

At this point the participation methodology was rewritten: The beginnings of meaning negotiation were introduced to the bilingual syllabus. For example, the following item was added, “If you have a question, ask the teacher in English, don’t ask another student in Japanese, and never pretend you understand if you really don’t “ask the instructor”. From this date, weekly efforts were made to remind students of the importance not only of participation but task-consequential meaning negotiation. That is, in pair work activities simply filling in the blanks was not the essence of the activity. Students were prompted to use classroom English patterns in their textbooks to negotiate meaning directly with the teacher, when the teacher was monitoring. Three participation aspects were added:

- Volunteering first when the instructor asks a question or asks for volunteers
- Answering questions (Cold-calling was employed to accommodate shyer students.)
- Helping the class in English (Looking up a word in the dictionary. Finding a better answer to a problem, etc.)

These items were added as gradable events, provided that they were in English and their information was correct.

Two negative participation items were also included to the rubric and syllabus under a new heading—Bad Participation: “Speaking out of turn” and “Making noise/causing a disturbance in class, preventing a pristine study environment.” Punitive action is not positive, but it was effective, especially in light of the mid-term self-grade calculation where students could see how participation affected their grade.

Observations From the Initial Stage of the OEQP

Progress monitoring, though still in its early stages of development, was constantly assessed against the participation matrices on the bilingual syllabus (Table 3). For example, were students volunteering answers, answering cold-call questions, and using opportunities to get participation points by helping others by looking up words in the dictionary? I began to step in when strong-willed students started to

Table 3
 2000- 2006 Syllabus-borne Participation Rubric

Good participation is...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteering. • Answering questions. • Helping the class in English (Looking up a word in the dictionary. Finding a better answer to a problem, etc.)

dominate a situation, by warning them and referencing the participation rubric. Moreover, whether positive or negative, point allocation became more obvious. Preventing participation assessment from hobbling teacher ability to teach and work with students (Shindler, 2003) as a metric was turned on its head. In fact, the outcome was the converse of this metric: with punitive measures now built in to the methodology, participation assessment enabled the teacher to work with students and keep safe comity.

- Student progress was constantly assessed against the participation rubric (Table 3) (Rogers, 2011; Lyons, 1989).
- By closely adhering to the participation rubric impartial point assignment became possible (Bean & Peterson, 2002; Burrell, 2009).
- Moreover closely adhering to the participation rubric safeguarded students from being discriminate against for their personalities, learning styles, or cultures (Shindler, 2003).
- Students' progress was monitor (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking, 1999).
- Subjectivity of participation grading began to disappear (Shindler, 2003; Morita, 2004; Black, 1995; Bean & Peterson, 2002; Burrell, 2009; Lyons, 1989; Mello, 2010; cited in Christensen, et al., 1995).
- I began making point allocation obvious by announcing "That's a point, Taro," or "Sorry, Tomoko, one point down" (Boniecki and Moore, 2003).
- Participation was based on communication skills (Dancer and Kamvounias, 2005; Black, 1995).
- Cold-calling provided a governor against strong-willed students from dominating (Bean and Peterson, 2002; Shindler, 2003; Dancer and Kamvounias, 2005).

- Cold-calling also helped check bias and favoritism (Black, 1995).
- Moreover cold-calling fostered opportunities for quiet students (Jones, 2008; Morita, 2004; Naraian, 2011).
- The rubric was clear and detailed about quality performance, but succinct (Tsou, 2005; Burrell, 2009; Shindler, 2003).
- Incorporated various participation structures—cold-calling, volunteering, and participation assessment of pair and group work (Patchen, 2005; Lyons, 1989).

2006-2009: Further Development of OEQP

This period of rubric development was marked by awarding points for all efforts. Also, the pre-OEQP methodology began to account for participation as a class-long assessment. Student tardiness, readiness to engage the activity, and willingness to remain seated until the teacher ended the class became participation criteria.

At this point the synthesis of the literature and the participation methodology was the continuous assessment of the students and their involvement with the teacher as an interdependent, organic whole. Referencing and reiteration of the participation rubric, including the implementation of a syllabus test exhibiting that participation is being scored, all reflected the primacy of positive, mindful classroom participation.

Observations from Further Development of the Model

The outcomes were different from earlier times when unruly students who were told to be quiet, could disregard the warning without fear of penalty. Unexcused tardiness was given a negative point as a start to assessing class-long compliance to participation standards. Moreover, the model proved to the students that participation in all of its guises was important and consistently being rewarded.

- Students began to more frequently come on time.
- Students began to settle down quicker at the beginning of class.
- Consistent use of the cue “Strike two!” caused unruly students from repeating offending behavior, with the knowledge that a repeat offense would incur a negative point.
- Participation grading from the beginning of class to the teacher cue that

class is finished.

- All of the above proved to the students that all components of participation were consistently being rewarded (Bean & Peterson, 2002; Burrell, 2009; Shindler, 2003).
- Other than negative point awards for disciplinary reasons, students were not penalized during participation point assignment (Bransford, 1999).

2009-2010: Breakthrough Years

The years 2009 and 2010 were a watershed period. That period included the introduction of name cards with bilingual classroom English on the back. At the top was a note in Japanese in bold face: “You can get participation points by using classroom English. When was the last time you used it?” Students’ name cards were shuffled before class and distributed, filling the seats at the front of the class. Students were seated with a new speaking partner each week. Added to the participation methodology, and explicitly added to the syllabus at this time, were point awards for meaning negotiation. To remind students of the importance of all of the syllabus-borne participation items, and as a further prevising of them, the students took a syllabus quiz on the third class of each semester.

Besides it being written in the syllabus and included in the syllabus quiz, this became the fourth way the students were reminded of this type of communication skill as participation. Consistency in grading was reinforced by ranked point scales depending on class size (Table 4).

Observations from This Stage of Development

The change having the largest effect was the introduction of random seat assignments. Students partnered with an unfamiliar person interacted more formally. Using the syllabus quiz had a reciprocal effect with the dynamic of Japanese in-groupness, as students were less apt to transgress the bad behavior matrices. They were more responsible to their pair partner, group members, and the class as a whole. Moreover, with the new point scales, a student in a class of 38 had as much a chance of getting a one hundred percentile in participation as a student in a class of 28.

Table 4
Participation Point Chart

> 36	32 - 35	29 - 31	25 - 28	< 24
12+ = 30	14+ = 30	16+ = 30	18+ = 30	20+ = 30
11 = 29	13 = 29	15 = 29	17 = 29	19 = 29
10 = 29	12 = 29	14 = 29	16 = 29	18 = 29
9 = 28	11 = 28	13 = 28	15 = 28	17 = 28
8 = 28	10 = 28	12 = 28	14 = 28	16 = 27
7 = 27	9 = 27	11 = 27	13 = 27	15 = 27
6 = 26	8 = 26	10 = 26	12 = 26	14 = 26
5 = 25	7 = 25	9 = 25	11 = 25	13 = 26
4 = 24	6 = 24	8 = 24	10 = 24	12 = 25
3 = 23	5 = 23	7 = 23	9 = 23	11 = 24
2 = 23	4 = 23	6 = 23	8 = 23	10 = 23
1 = 22	3 = 22	5 = 22	7 = 22	9 = 23
0 = 20	2 = 21	4 = 21	6 = 21	8 = 22
-1 = 12	1 = 20	3 = 20	5 = 20	7 = 21
-2 = 9	0 = 17	2 = 19	4 = 19	6 = 20
-3 = 6	-1 = 12	1 = 18	3 = 18	5 = 19
-4 = 3	-2 = 9	0 = 16	2 = 17	4 = 19
-5+ = 0	-3 = 6	-1 = 12	1 = 16	3 = 18
	-4 = 3	-2 = 9	0 = 14	2 = 17
	-5+ = 0	-3 = 6	-1 = 12	1 = 16
		-4 = 3	-2 = 9	0 = 14
		-5+ = 0	-3 = 6	-1 = 12
			-4 = 3	-2 = 9
			-5+ = 0	-3 = 6
				-4 = 3
				-5+ = 0

The header row shows number of students in the class. The columns contain two numbers. The numbers on the left of the equal sign are participation points. The numbers to the right are the participation grade out of a maximum of 30 points (i.e., participation is 30% of the class final grade).

- Initiation of random seat assignments prevented friendship distraction and helped students attend to the learning task at hand.
- Students adhered to the participation plan, reminded to them orally by the instructor.
- The syllabus primacy was reminded to the students by the syllabus quiz.
- Students were more responsible to their pair partner and the class as a whole.
- There was a small increase in students using classroom English on the back of the name card; it was increasingly common to see students checking random name cards for it and to self-correct oral usage.
- New participation point scales calibrated to class size made record-keeping more accurate between large and smaller classes.
- The difficulty of task was included in the participation assessment (Bean and Peterson, 2002).
- The teacher consistently following the complete list of classroom participation helped prevent imputing identities to students (Morita, 2004).
- The methodology incorporated a point ceiling so assessment was not liable to point-fishing (Boniecki and Moore, 2003).

Transformation into OEQP

The finalization of the participation methodology and its transformation into the OEQP occurred in 2013. In that year, an itemized section comprised of a complete explanation of what participation was and included 30 specific point awards. The participation block of the syllabus then contained three types of items:

- Common participation.
- Participation as self-discipline and self-direction.
- Participation as observable effort towards quality performance (subtitled: Participation as learning performance).

The third item became the mature form of the OEQP. It is a scale of eleven specific point awards (Table 5). From that came the four-point overview distilled for easy reference for both teacher and students, and accounted for a timely full-sentence, quality utterance (Jones, 2008):

Table 5

OEQP Participation Rubric

ITEM	POINTS
1. Asking, answering questions in English, in a full sentence, using target patterns or grammar.	+½
2. Using classroom English (meaning negotiation) on the back of student name card.	+½
3. Successfully using English for other examples of meaning negotiation.	+½
4. In pair or group work one clear, loud utterance/response, in English, in a full sentence, using target patterns or grammar.	+½
5. In pair or group work one clear, loud repair recast utterance/ response, in English, in a full sentence, using target patterns or grammar.	+½
6. Finishing written work, in English, in a full sentence, using target patterns or grammar. for the first 3 evidences within stipulated time period	+½
7. Answering cold call questions, in English, in a full sentence, using target patterns or grammar.	+½
8. Correct repair recast answering of cold call questions, in English, in a full sentence, using target patterns or grammar.	+½
9. Volunteered answer to class-wide questions, in English, in a full sentence, correctly using target patterns or grammar.	+½
10. Correct repair recast of volunteered answer to class-wide questions, in English, in a full sentence, using target patterns or grammar.	+½
11. Meaning negotiation cut off (i.e. Failure to repair recast; silence; turning to partner(s) for Japanese meaning or answer; speaking in Japanese).	No points; loss of potential +½

- Speaking loud and clear enough so the teacher can understand you
- Using only English
- Speaking in full sentences
- Successfully attempting to accurately use new words and phrases the teacher has modeled

These rewards were consistently reminded to the students by attaching the

syllabus to the board and referring to it before every oral task. Cold-calling, asking for volunteers, and circuiting the classroom reduced the impact of the student being paired with an incompatible partner or being paired with a distracting friend. Other than cold-call and answer-volunteer sessions, the teacher circuted the classroom each class period, monitoring each pair or group and awarded points.

During pair or group work monitoring, the teacher being nearby caused an increase in students actively using classroom English. This caused an increase in meaning negotiations and students being duly rewarded. Occasionally, when the session ended, a student would raise his hand and say, “You didn’t check me!”, or students from across the room started to raise their hands to use classroom English, highlighting the motivational impact of the OEQP checking and rewarding technique. Most students were able to get points even directly after the introduction of new material, not to mention during expansion, follow-up, and review events. If the student’s performance met all four of these provisos, the student would receive a positive point reward.

Students were only allowed to receive one point in any one activity. To get more points their efforts had to be consistent at various tasks throughout the 90-minute period. The methodology included considering the problem’s difficulty. That is, tasks that required multiple quality utterances, such as giving directions, were awarded multiple points. The complete, detailed, and itemized nature of the points and the marking of those points against the rubric became a cold, matter-of-fact process. The act of student monitoring became clear and systematized and strengthened grading consistency. Grading itself became more consistent, granular, and reliable.

On the last day of each semester an awards ceremony takes place. Top participation point-getters are called to the front of the class and receive a special stamp on their name cards, and their names are listed on the board under the heading, “Top Participation Points.” This is the last reminder to the students of the primacy of positive, quality classroom participation. The effect on the students was obvious, with the recipients’ smiles and other students’ applause or positive vocalizations for them.

Discussion

Being armed with the detailed participation itemization in the bilingual syllabus enabled the teacher to employ the OEQP rubric when monitoring students. Students, now reminded at the beginning of each pair-work, group-work, or cold-call session, clearly understood the meaning of quality utterances for which they could earn points.

The teacher assumed roles of monitor, facilitator, and manager, gave transactional feedback, and granted students recast chances, which guaranteed the possibilities of point rewards. Crediting students for taking a chance, making an error, and correctly recasting in front of the teacher, to get positive participation points, motivated the students. That is, when the teacher approached student pairs they often became animated, quickly attending to the task at hand. Occasionally after finishing a short AB exchange they would quickly switch roles before the teacher moved on, to ensure that both students earned a point. The OEQP rubric and methodology does not dock a student for inability to muster a satisfactory utterance. An unsatisfactory utterance, or none at all is not graded as a fail, but as a non-event—neither positive nor negative.

The methodology gives students ample opportunity to demonstrate quality output throughout the class period. By rotating through the class each lesson, the teacher has less chance of being on the other side of the classroom, missing a student participating within the framework of the OEQP. Moreover, there have been many cases of “point jumping”, where the teacher and student are engaged in a transactional feedback negotiation and that student’s partner delivers the valid and complete utterance, earning him a participation point instead for helping.

While I was waiting for a student to speak, or when I moved between pairs, I cursorily monitored the entire class. If a student was speaking in L1 or was not engaged with his partner, I tried to make eye contact from across the room. Maintaining it for a few seconds communicated that the student was not appropriately participating. If that had no effect, the student was verbally reproached with, “That’s too much Japanese, Saburo. Strike two,” or “Don’t stop, Tomoko. Keep going or find another partner.” Later, during the circuit if there

were repeated transgressions, they were met with, “You’re still speaking Japanese, Saburo. Strike three!” or “You’re still not doing anything, Tomoko. Sorry, that’s a minus participation point.” These moves, done in front of the class, had a noticeable positive and productive effect on the whole class, causing all students focusing more on the task at hand.

The OEQP methodology may not be for every teacher. In the case of this action research, the classes involved were from 16 to 18 groups of students per semester, with the average number of students being about 32 students per class. There is a real possibility of teacher fatigue. Certain teachers may feel uncomfortable monitoring students while carrying a pencil and paper, feeling that the scoring interferes with monitoring. The way I get around this is to hold the pencil and paper behind my back until the monitoring of the student is finished. When that is finished I mark the grade sheet. If teacher fatigue becomes an issue, cold-call techniques and students volunteering answers can be substituted. The positive side of active circuiting is that it deepens teacher involvement in individual student activity. It allows the teacher to become actively engaged with all students. Circuiting the classroom also exposes the teacher to recurring mistakes that can later be put on the board where they can be dealt with all-class.

Conclusion

This research helps crystallize what quality participation is in an EFL classroom: the student’s quality of involvement in oral lesson materials. Involvement encompasses quality linguistic output. The OEQP rubric/methodology demonstrates the meaning of quality with a four-point success matrix (see Results), which can be quickly and succinctly reminded to the students. Their attitudes toward the class and tasks improve when clearly informed how to take part once the class begins. The OEQP technique generates positive changes in students’ classroom participation behavior, and gives students strategies for quality output and the point-rewards that go along with quality participation. Quality participation also covers language negotiation and helping fellow students push their learning forward. Also, being effective at a given task enhances the potential for student participation in a

positive reciprocating cycle. The OEQP rubric and methodology is an exacting and flexible quality-based classroom participation assessment mechanism that can provide fair, consistent, and dispassionate grade outcomes.

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