

Synergizing Formative and Summative Assessment of Presentation Slideshows

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Abstract

This report describes research carried out in an EFL public speaking course at a Japanese university. While student presentations typically involve both delivery and student slideshows being assessed at the same time, this investigation looks at separating the two components and assessing presentation slideshows separately. Using a summative assessment instrument, a slideshow rubric, a series of related formative assessments were also developed and administered with the goal of creating an synergy of assessments whereby the combined effect of interweaving these assessments together would promote greater student learning. The 22 university students in this class engaged in trio of related assessments (two formative, one summative) in developing a slideshow for a persuasive speech. Students produced a first draft of their presentation slideshows, and these were used for a self-assessment, and also for a formative teacher assessment (ungraded) prior to the final graded summative assessment. The report into the formative use of summative assessment describes the processes and instruments used in this experiment in assessment synergy. Assessment information and data from five students in the class provide actual assessment examples to help delineate the processes described. These student examples, and the teacher feedback included, help demonstrate that the formative use of summative assessment had positive effects on student learning related to the effective construction of presentation slideshows. The report concludes with a call for more classroom based research and publications in EFL/ESL contexts related to the synergy of formative and summative assessment processes, practices and instruments.

Key words: assessment for learning, formative and summative assessment, presentations

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I. Introduction

According to the on-line version of the Oxford English dictionary, the word *synergy* comes from the Greek term ‘sunergos’ meaning ‘working together’, and refers to the ‘*interaction or cooperation of two or more agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects*’. This report describes an attempt to have two varieties of assessment, formative and summative, interact and cooperate; working together to improve classroom learning and teaching. In their book reporting efforts to put formative assessment procedures into practice in schools in the UK, Black et al., (2003) include the formative use of summative assessment as one of four practices that teachers found were effective ways of promoting student learning. This report also discusses the formative use of summative assessment, and describes such a procedure in a university course in Japan. It has been noted that, at the tertiary level, little is known about the classroom assessment practices of teachers of English as a second or foreign language (Cheng, Rodgers & Wang, 2008). This report seeks to make a contribution to this limited field of assessment knowledge and make public a synchronized assessment process as one ‘living example of implementation’ (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

These two varieties of assessment will be discussed in more detail below, but a useful starting point for what is meant by these terms notes that while summative assessment (SA) has the purpose of reporting on student learning achieved at a certain time, formative assessment (FA) has the single purpose of informing both learning and teaching (ASF, 2005). The concept of assessment *purpose* is to be noted in this description, because “with assessment, purpose is everything” (Stiggins, 2008, 3).

Formative assessment has been much discussed and researched in the years since Black & Wiliams’ (1998) seminal review of its’ uses and benefits. Yet, for teachers at all levels of education, the word ‘assessment’ is primarily associated with the end-of -unit, or end- of- term summative version when grades are calculated and distributed to students. This association is a reflection of the persistent view that assessment signifies making judgments rather than helping learning (Harlen, 2007, a). Yet, because of the importance of both formative and summative purposes in promoting successful learning, and the need for balance between them, assessment needs to be seen as an instructional tool for use while learning is happening, as well as an accountability tool to check if learning has occurred (Balanced Assessment, 2003). Stiggins & Chappuis (2005) neatly summarize the core of the issue as follows: “The teaching challenge is to use the assessment in advance of the graded event, as a vehicle to deepen the learning and to reveal to students their developing proficiencies” (p. 5).

This report discusses one response to this ‘teaching challenge’ of synchronizing FA and SA. In an EFL course called *Public Presentations*, in the Department of English at Tokyo Woman’s Christian University, students’ computerized slideshows for their end of term presentations were assessed formatively prior to the summative grading event. All slideshows were constructed using the most common presentation software, Microsoft PowerPoint. In academic Writing classes in higher education it is common practice for students to submit first drafts of their essays for teacher feedback prior to submitting the final version. The same process was engaged in here with regard to the slideshow component of students’ final presentations.

An oral presentation, supported by a set of slides (or “deck”), is a communicative event

with two main elements: the performance (the speaker) and the slideshow (visual aids) (Farkas, 2005). In this classroom assessment report, these two main elements of students' final presentations were assessed separately. Students submitted a working version of their slideshow, which was formatively assessed by both themselves and the teacher, prior to submitting the final version of the deck on the day of their presentation. The final version of students' slideshows were then summatively graded, and this score comprised 25% of their final course grade. As will be delineated below, the goal here was to use assessment to make learning and teaching more effective through this synchronized assessment process. The broader purpose of the assessment framework reported on here is captured in the following quote from Harlen (2007): *The overall purpose is to foster learning with understanding and the skills and attitudes that are needed for successful and continued leaning* (p. 132, italics added).

This report will describe how formative and summative assessment elements were synchronized together in a one-semester university course, with the focus on the formative use of summative assessment. In this case the same assessment tool, a PowerPoint slideshow scoring rubric, was used in three ways (student self-assessment, formative instructor assessment, and finally summative assessment) in order to promote and improve student learning. The assessment tool and the procedures for its' various uses in the Public Presentations (PP) course will be described. This will be followed by a discussion and analysis of the procedure, with examples of the different assessments collected during the course of this investigation.

In this report of FA and SA synergy, the aim is for the trio of assessment events to be synergized into "a balanced and integrated assessment system, with all parts working together in the service of student success" (Stiggins, 2006, p. 17). Dunn et. al, 2004 describe such interaction as "the interweaving of formative assessment tasks towards a summative event" (p. 18), and this description captures the assessment interplay evidenced in this report.

We begin by framing this investigation with an overview of the related literature on synchronizing formative and summative assessment within a course framework.

II. Literature Review

This review of the assessment literature will focus on a brief discussion of the following three areas: the formative and summative assessment distinction, synchronizing both assessment purposes, and assessing presentation slide shows.

1. The FA/SA distinction

It has been noted that summative and formative assessment functions can be seen as the "the ends of a continuum along which assessment can be located (William & Black, 1996, p. 542), and a distinction has been made between these two terms for more than forty years. It was Scriven (1967), in reference to program evaluation, who first suggested a distinction between formative evaluation and summative evaluation. The intention of formative evaluation was to foster development and improvement within an ongoing activity, product or program. In contrast, summative evaluation was used to assess whether the results of the object being evaluated met stated goals. Bloom, Hastings & Maddaus (1971) were the first to propose that teachers should engage in formative assessment activities after stages of teaching and that, rather than relying on summative outcomes, they should provide feedback to students to target teaching and learning.

Sadler's (1989), *Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems*, has proven to be a seminal and oft-quoted work in the classroom-based assessment literature. He notes that the meanings attached to the word formative relates to the idea of "forming or molding something, usually to achieve a desired end", while summative "is concerned with summing up or summarizing the achievement status of a student and is geared towards reporting at the end of a course of study..." (p.120). Sadler (1989) was one of the first to note that the primary distinction between FA and SA was not related to the timing of the assessment, but rather to assessment purpose and effect. However, timing is a consideration and connects with a key difference between SA and FA; while summative assessment generally signifies the end of instruction (or part thereof), formative assessment anticipates that further action will be taken (Baroudi, 2007).

While a review of the literature shows that there are some differing interpretations of the meaning of the two terms, and, in particular, many teachers and researchers have misunderstood formative assessment (Black, 2003). McTighe & O'Connor (2005, p.10) provide a succinct gloss of the common current understanding of SA and FA and their uses:

- **Summative assessments** summarize what students have learned at the conclusion of an instructional segment. These assessments tend to be evaluative, and teachers typically encapsulate and report assessment results as a score or a grade.
- **Formative assessments** occur concurrently with instruction. These ongoing assessments provide specific feedback to teachers and students for the purpose of guiding teaching to improve learning. Formative assessments include both formal and informal methods... . Although teachers may record the results of formative assessments, we shouldn't factor these results into summative evaluation and grading.

Gibbs & Stobart (1993) made a significant distinction between assessment purposes (the intentions behind the assessment process) and assessment uses (actual use made of the results). Following this distinction, what determines whether an assessment may be labeled formative or summative is dependent on how the results are used; summative assessment documents how much learning has occurred at a point in time and it's results are used to make some sort of judgment (typically a grade); while formative assessment is more dynamic and ongoing and it's results are used by students and teachers to decide next steps in the learning process (Chappuis & Chappuis, 2008). A key point here is that an assessment may not be inherently labeled formative or summative, but application of these labels will be dependent on purposes and particularly results. Wiliam & Leahy (2007) are explicit about this stating:

. . . the terms formative and summative apply not to assessments themselves, but to the functions they serve. As a result, the same assessment can be both formative and summative. Assessment is formative when the information arising from the assessment is fed back within the system and is actually used to improve the performance of the system (p. 39).

The key idea here is that formative assessment is focused on the improvement of student performance.

In writing about the relationship between assessment for formative and summative purposes, Harlen (2006) notes that both purposes- to help learning and to summarize what has been learned- are central to effective educational practice. Harlen further notes that assessment systems become more dependable when teachers have a very good understanding of learning goals and of students' progression towards them. Like Wiliam & Black (1996), Harlen notes that the relationship between FA and SA should be described as a 'dimension' rather than a 'dichotomy'. The assessment purpose at the summative end of this dimension is to account for what has been achieved at a certain point, while with FA the key purpose is for both students and teachers to identify next learning steps and how to proceed with them.

While SA finalizes and is present-oriented, looking at what has been achieved by a student at a certain point in time, FA is future-oriented, looking ahead to next steps in improving student performance or development of knowledge and skills. It is also important to note that while all assessments have the potential to serve a summative function, only some have the additional capability of serving formative functions (Wiliam & Black, 1996). After their review of the literature, Wiliam & Leahy (2007) point out that the empirical evidence suggests that the assessment which has the greatest impact on student achievement is short cycle FA.

Added to this description of FA and SA presented above, "a more transparent distinction" in the context of classroom based student assessment (James & Pedder, 2006, p. 109), is between assessment **of** learning and assessment **for** learning. While summative-purposed assessment *of* learning is focused on grading and reporting, in the formative-oriented assessment *for* learning, assessment is considered part of teaching and is explicitly used to promote learning (Assessment Reform Group, 1999). The ultimate goal of assessment for learning is to get students involved in their own assessment so that they can think about where they are in their learning, understand what they need to do next, and the steps they need to take to improve (James, 2002). In this formative-purposed assessment, students and teachers work together to improve and maximize student learning and performance prior to the graded summative event.

2. Synchronizing FA and SA

The above discussion highlights the key idea of *purpose* in assessment use and in evaluating assessment programs. Yet, it is a fact that FA and SA can work at cross-purposes, and interfere with or hinder student learning rather than help develop it. Summative assessment especially can skew and distort formative practices that teachers may attempt to incorporate. A number of authors and publications have discussed the alignment of FA and SA so they work together rather than against each other. However, in the published literature, there are few published accounts of research related to the use of summative assessment for formative purposes. This is particularly true for English language teaching contexts.

More than ten years ago, Black et al. (2003) studied the assessment practices of 36 Math, Science and English teachers in secondary schools in England. In that context, the giving of regular tests was a familiar part of classroom practice and attempts were made to convert these summative tests into more formative assessment practices. The investigation conducted at these UK schools found that teachers struggled to reconcile formative assessment practices with the pressures of external high-stakes summative testing. Black et al. (2003) noted that it was unrealistic to expect teachers to practice separation between assessment for and assessment of

learning and that the challenge was to achieve a more positive relationship between them.

In a conference presentation reporting an account of the development of these formative assessment practices in UK schools, Black (2003) poses the question as to whether FA and SA can serve learning together. He summarizes the case for giving priority to formative assessment practices because they can; produce learning gains, are welcomed by students, are linked to basic principles of good learning, have a positive effect on student motivation and self-esteem, and also teachers engaged in using FA in their classes feel work is professionally rewarding. Regarding FA, Black (2003) makes the following key assertion: “For formative assessment, the learning caused by the assessment is paramount. . . . What really matters is whether the result of the assessment is successful learning” (p. 14).

Another published example of using formative assessment for summative purposes is one by Maxwell (2004), used for certification purposes in secondary schools in Queensland, Australia. Maxwell describes an assessment approach where student portfolios are used to collect evidence of learning over time. Maxwell defines this process as ‘progressive assessment’ and writes:

. . . progressive assessment blurs the boundary between formative and summative assessment. All progressive assessment necessarily involves feedback to the student about the quality of their performance. This can be expressed in terms of the student’s progress towards desired learning outcomes and suggested steps for further development and improvement (2004, 2-3).

In order for such an assessment process to work, according to Maxwell, it is a necessity that learning expectations be clearly expressed for students in terms of criteria showing common dimensions of learning. Only when this is done can students be engaged as to whether they are on-target with regard to the learning objectives, and what is required for them to improve their performance in future assessments using the same criteria.

Retired professor John Biggs has been an influential voice in the area of teaching and assessment in higher education and has focused some attention on formative and summative assessment working together to assist the learning process. Biggs argued that “sensible educational models make effective use of both FA (formative assessment) and SA (summative assessment)” (1998, p. 105.) .88. He noted that:

. . . there is a powerful interaction between FA and SA that could usefully be incorporated in an overall synthesis, so that both backwash (from SA) and feedback (from FA) are conceptualized within the same framework. Then indeed one might have a powerful enhancement to learning, using such a synthesis to engineer backwash from SA so that the effects were positive, and backwash from SA supporting the feedback from FA (Biggs, 1998, 32).

The ‘overall synthesis’ referred to here was a goal of this research project, an attempt to conceptualize FA and SA within the same assessment framework.

In writing about assessment formats and their potential to enhance learning, Kennedy et al. (2006) contend that the coalescence of FA and internal summative assessment is possible. While noting that SA is different in form and function from formative assessment, these authors note that a synthesis between the two can occur if SA can be more inclusive of the basic principles of formative assessment, and this will have a positive effect on the learning and teaching that occurs in a course.

One of the few articles explicitly focused on the uses of formative and summative assessment is Harlen's (2005) *Teachers summative practices and assessment for learning-tensions and synergies*. In it, Harlen discusses how FA and SA can affect one another in both positive and negative ways. Harlen makes it clear that for an assessment to have a formative purpose it is essential to report to students the things that need to be improved to raise their performance to a higher level. Harlen (2005) contends that while formative and summative assessments are needed for different educational purposes, they can exist in synergy.

In her report regarding the perceptions and realities of formative and summative assessment, Taras (2008) points out that discussion about the tension between SA and FA is prevalent in the assessment literature. But she notes these two are more easily reconciled in a higher education context, with the absence of external summative testing, and the fact that all assessment is the responsibility of instructors and controlled by them. Her article reports on a small-scale study of lecturers at an English university and found that they had an incomplete and fragmented understanding of FA and SA and the relationship between them. Taras (2008) writes that future research needs to address the issue of reconciling FA and SA so that they are 'mutually supportive' and notes that reports of learners involvement in the assessment process has been a neglected area of research.

3. Assessing Student Slide Shows

Published research on the assessment of student presentation slideshows is extremely limited. Only one other example (Dobson, 2006) has been identified in the literature review for this research. In an article about understanding and using PowerPoint, Farkas (2005) notes that while this medium has generated much casual commentary, very little careful analysis or empirical research has been done. In considering the assessment of slideshows he makes the following points:

PowerPoint seems simple. Almost anyone can type slide titles and bulleted points. . . . PowerPoint, in fact, is complex. It is complex because it encompasses the challenges of public speaking; because graphs and diagrams and (increasingly) multimedia components often appear on slides; but also because we must carefully consider the layout and appearance of the slides, the phrasing of the slide text, and the overall structure of the deck-both as visual communication and as support for the oral channel (Farkas, 2005, 320).

Dobson reported on such an assessment with undergraduates at a Norwegian university college and focused on the validity of assessing PowerPoint slideshows. On the basis of his case study, Dobson concluded that PowerPoint presentations can be set as student assignments and used for assessment purposes, in particular for formative purposes; assessment for learning. He

also called for further case studies of PowerPoint presentations used for assessment within an academic setting.

The above review of the literature related to the formative use of summative assessment shows that there are some valuable sources for teachers/researchers to consult in engaging in such related research. However, we can also see that there are few published accounts and discussions of attempts to synchronize FA and SA into a framework that both promotes and evaluates student learning.

We now move on to describe and discuss the research reported on in this paper.

III. Methodology

This investigation into using formative assessment for summative purposes involves a course, taught by the author, in the Department of English at Tokyo Woman's Christian University called *Public Presentations* (PP). This two-semester course involved 22 students, all Japanese, in their third year of study. The PP course introduced students to the theory and practice of public speaking. Topics covered included methods of organizing a speech, delivering a speech, the types and uses of evidence as supporting material, and the effective use of visual aids, particularly computerized slideshows. In addition to regularly occurring mini-presentations during class time, students were required to prepare and deliver a main final presentation at the end of each semester. In the first semester this was an informative speech, while the second semester it was a speech with a persuasive purpose. These two main presentations were required to be between 8-10 minutes in length and supported by a computerized slideshow (typically using Microsoft PowerPoint software) Essentially, the PP course was designed to develop in students' the communication skills necessary to analyze verbal discourse and to perform effectively in public speaking situations. Course objectives included students gaining the skills, experience, and self-confidence for speaking in public settings, including a thorough technological competence for multimedia presentations. The course textbook was *The Essential Elements of Public Speaking, 2nd Edition* (DeVito, 2006).

The Public Presentations course was divided into Part 1, in the first semester (April-July) and Part 2 for the second semester (Sept. – Jan.). The assessment framework for Part 1 was as follows: three chapter tests (45%), final slideshow presentation (40%), and a final presentation self-report (15%). This self-report involved answering a series of questions about the final presentation after viewing a video recording of their performance. As mentioned, the final presentation for Part 1 was an informative speech, which according to the course textbook, "... seeks to create understanding: to clarify, enlighten, correct misunderstandings, or demonstrate how something work" (DeVito, 2006, 18).

Chapter tests, used in both semesters, were taken from the Instructors Manual and Test Bank accompanying the course textbook and were included to ensure that students were reading and engaging with the textbook content and the ideas and information therein which would help in the design and delivery of their major presentations. Chapter test scores were recorded and used for summative grading purposes.

In the second half of the course (PP2) changes were made to the assessment framework of the course. The biggest change was that I decided that the presentation slideshow and the

delivery of the presentation itself would be assessed separately. This was primarily due to the problematic nature of student slideshows for their informative presentations at the end of the first half of the course. Problems with slideshows (such as excessive textual information, unclear progression of ideas, layout, and writing mechanics) were common in students' informative speeches and I decided to pay special attention to improving slideshows in the second semester. An additional reason for splitting up assessments for the slideshow and spoken performance (delivery) was that it also lightens the assessment load on the teacher on presentation day allowing for a primary focus on the delivery of the speech.

The assessment framework for the second part of Public Presentations was as follows: three chapter tests (45%), slideshow (25%) and final presentation delivery (30%). Students were required to submit a final version, color copy, of their presentation slides on the day of their final presentation and it was these slides which were formally graded. While the purpose of the final presentation in the first semester was an informative one, in the second semester students were required to deliver a persuasive presentation, one which "... seeks to influence attitudes or behaviors: to strengthen or change audience attitudes or to inspire hearers to take some specific action (De Vito, 2006, 18). Persuasive topics selected by students included those opposing TV advertising for kids, cosmetic surgery, school uniforms, and those supporting vegetarianism, gay marriage and abortion.

The class textbook takes students through ten steps in preparing and presenting a public speech. They are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 10 Steps in preparing and presenting a speech (in De Vito, 2006)

1. Select your topic and purpose
2. Analyze your audience
3. Research your topic
4. Develop your thesis and main points
5. Support your main points
6. Organize your speech materials
7. Word your speech
8. Construct your introduction, conclusion and transitions
9. Rehearse your speech
10. Deliver your speech

Approximately a month before doing their final presentation students should have reached the construction step (8) in the process, including working on their slideshow. At this point students were required to bring to class a printed first draft of their presentation slideshow. In class, students first were given a rubric to self-evaluate their slides. They took 20 minutes of class time to complete this self-evaluation. Slides were then given to the teacher for a formative assessment, using a teachers' version of the same evaluation rubric.

It should be noted that in the two classes prior to students submitting their first drafts, classroom instruction specifically paid attention to all the slideshow criterion used on the assessment rubric (introduction, content, text elements, layout, graphics/visuals, writing mechanics and citations). In addition, the course textbook chapter entitled, *Using Supporting Materials and Presentation Aids* (De Vito, 2006) was reviewed, with particular emphasis on the extensive section related to computer-assisted presentations. Students were told to use this textbook section to help plan and organize their slideshows, and classroom instruction made use of these textbook pages also.

In the next class, a week later, the first draft of slides along with teachers' formative assessment were returned to students. Class time was used to begin revisions and the teacher circulated talking with individual students and engaging in troubleshooting. After this class students had approximately two weeks to further edit and revise their slides and prepare for their final presentation. Final presentations for the 22 students were completed over a three-day period during the final exam week, with approximately 7 presentations being completed in a 90-minute session on each day. In addition to evaluating presentation delivery, final versions of the slideshows were picked up from students and summatively evaluated, using the same criteria included in both formative assessments (student self-assessment and teacher assessment).

A student self-assessment version of the slideshow evaluation rubric is shown below in Table 2. This rubric is a modified version of the PowerPoint rubric by Vandervelde (2001). The teacher versions, both formative and summative, were very similar to this, with the same criterion specified.

Table 2: Slideshow evaluation rubric (student self-evaluation version)

Presentation Slideshow (first draft) <u>Self-evaluation</u>	
Student name: _____ Topic: _____	
Part 1	
4 = very good 3 = good 2 = average/OK 1 = weak	
Criteria	Rating
1. Introduction	Introduction presents the overall topic and draws the audience into the presentation. It is clear, coherent and interesting.
2. Content <i>(most important)</i>	Information is accurate and serves the purpose of persuading the audience. The content is clear and concise with a logical progression of ideas and supporting information.
3. Text elements	Fonts, point size and colors make text easy to read. Text is easy to follow and understand.
4. Layout	The layout is visually pleasing and contributes to the overall message with appropriate use of headings, sub-headings and white space. Layout is not cluttered or confusing.
5. Graphics/visuals	Graphics/visuals assist in presenting an overall theme and enhance understanding of concepts, ideas, etc.
6. Writing mechanics	The text is clearly written with no/few errors in grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. Easy to read and understand.
7. Citations	Sources of information are properly cited so audience can determine credibility and authority of information.
Slideshow: Overall Evaluation	<u>first draft</u>

Students were required to carefully examine the first draft of their slideshow according to the seven different criteria and mark each element from 4 (very good) to 1 (weak). An overall mark for the draft of the slideshow deck was also required, for a more holistic view of the slideshow. On Part 2 of this evaluation, shown on the reverse side of the student version, students were instructed to make notes in three boxes related to (1) strong points of their slideshow, (2) weak areas, and (3) things to work on for the final version. This self-evaluation was completed during class time, while looking at the first version of their slides. After this time, both the slides and student self-evaluation were submitted to the teacher.

The above rubric, and the three versions of it used in the assessment system described here, makes concrete for students the key element of *task clarity* in that they can clearly understand the learning goal and how their learning will be evaluated (McTighe & O'Connor, 2005).

The teacher formative assessment of the 22 student slideshows involved examining the slides in each deck and using an instructor's version of the same rubric with an added space at the bottom for teacher commentary. Notes were also made on the slides themselves, identifying confusing parts, or suggesting changes. For example, awkward phraseology was marked "R" for 're-write'. Students were required to make their own revisions and any errors were not fixed by the teacher. Student self-evaluations were not viewed by the teacher prior to formative assessment, and only given a cursory viewing later. While providing formative feedback, notes were made by the teacher about recurring problems (e.g. lack of citations) and these notes were used to plan for re-teaching in subsequent classes. First drafts of slideshows with teacher notations and the formative assessment were returned in the following weeks class. Students were given time to work on revisions during class and the teacher was able to talk briefly and individually with most students. Students were able to answer questions, and time was also made in the final classes for re-teaching or reminding students about weak areas noticed in the first drafts. On the day of the final presentations, coming a few weeks after formative assessment was engaged in, students submitted a final edition of their slideshows. These were summatively assessed separately after the presentation. A week later students were able to pick up both the final slideshow evaluation, and the grade for their presentation delivery, worth, respectively, 25% and 30% of their final grades.

It should be noted that on the day of final presentations, aside from the PowerPoint slideshow, a grading rubric for evaluating student performance of the persuasive speech included the following criteria:

1. **Introduction** (effective opening to the speech)
2. **Vocal delivery** (clear (pronunciation), easy to understand, good pace, communicative speaking style)
3. **Physical delivery** (eye contact, body language, gestures)
4. **Language use** (clear, good explanations, easy to understand)
5. **Organization** (introduction, body, conclusion, coherent, easy to follow)
6. **Claim/Position** [for or against] clear, persuasive
7. **Reasoning** (position clear, effective reasons, facts, details to support position)
8. **Conclusion** (summary of main points, effective ending)

These criteria were based on an assessment rubric included in the course book teachers' guide. On the day of the final presentations, a peer assessment element was also included in order to keep students engaged and reinforce the key elements of delivery. A student version of the scoring rubric for delivery, including the above points, was copied and students evaluated their peer's presentations. These peer evaluations were collected at the end of each final presentation session. They were not included in the scoring framework for the course.

Students' final grade sheets contained two summative assessments (with feedback and scores), one on each side of the grade sheet. One side contained the summative PowerPoint slideshow rubric, while the other contained an overall assessment of the speech itself, based on the elements mentioned above.

This process of synchronizing course assessment by making formative use of summative assessment of student PowerPoint slideshows will be further delineated and analyzed in the following section, and some particular student examples will be presented.

IV. Results and Discussion

This discussion will be divided into three parts: first an analysis of the two formative assessments of slideshow first drafts (student self-assessment, teacher assessment), followed by a discussion of the summative assessment and grading of the final version of student slideshows, and finally a drawing of all element together to assess whether a synergy of FA and SA was demonstrated.

Readers will be able to have a clearer picture of the process engaged in through the inclusion of five examples of student involvement with the assessment process. The complete assessment documentation of one of these students' slideshows (Yuka) will be included as exemplar in the appendices to this report.

At the beginning of this section it may be useful for the reader to briefly turn now to the Appendices section, as it will remind readers of the assessment process used for each student, and will help clarify the discussion to follow. The following three appendices are included for one student, Yuka, and her slideshow in favor of the controversial topic of abortion:

1. Appendix A (formative assessment 1, student self-assessment, parts 1 and 2)
2. Appendix B (formative assessment 2, teacher evaluation) and,
3. Appendix C (summative assessment and grade for final draft of slideshow).

The reader is reminded here that the assessment procedures used in this process stem from the teacher practices described by Black et al. (2003) in UK secondary schools as they tried to work out useful strategies in making formative use of summative tests. Black et al. (2003) reported that there were three main possibilities for improving classroom practice in attempting to have a more positive relationship between FA and SA:

1. Students should be engaged in a reflective review of the work they have done to enable them to plan their revision effectively;
2. Students should be encouraged to set exam questions and mark answers;
3. Students should be encouraged through peer and self-assessment to apply criteria to help

them understand how their work might be improved (p. 56).

In this report students' final PowerPoint presentation may be considered a summative test. Two of the three practices used by the teachers in Black et al.'s (2003) report (i.e. numbers 1 and 3 above) were made use of in the assessment process described here: engaging students in a reflective review of their work to plan effective revisions, and using self-assessment and applying specific assessment criteria to show how their slideshows could be improved.

Part A. The Formative Assessments

1. Student self-assessment

In refocusing attention on assessment used for formative purposes, it is useful to be reminded of what the term entails. Black and Wiliam (1998) argue that FA is "at the heart of effective teaching" (p.2). In an earlier work these authors state that, "in order to serve a formative function, an assessment must yield evidence that, with appropriate construct-referenced interpretations, indicates the existence of a gap between actual and desired levels of performance and suggests actions that are in fact successful in closing the gap" (Wiliam & Black, 1996, 542). As will be seen, the rubric used for assessing slideshows notifies students of this gap between actual and desired performance levels for their slideshows, and points them towards the gap-closing actions needed.

In this case two types of formative activities were put in play, a student self-assessment of their slides, and a teacher assessment. Both assessments used the same PowerPoint slideshow rubric, with the addition of a comments section at the end of the teachers' version.

All twenty of the students in the Public Presentations course brought first drafts of their slideshows to class on the assigned day. The student version of the assessment rubric was distributed and a few minutes were taken to review the criterion items on the rubric. Students were then instructed to closely examine their slideshow first drafts and were given approximately 20 minutes to complete the self-assessment.

As noted in the methodology section of this report, students' were required to self-assess their slideshows according to seven criterion (introduction, content, text elements, layout, graphics/visuals, writing mechanics, citations) prior to giving an overall evaluation of their first draft (4= very good, 3= good, 2= average/OK, 1= weak). On the reverse side of the rubric, for part 2, students made notes related to strong and weak points and things to work on for the final version of the slideshow. Table 3 below reports how four students completed the self-assessment of their first draft (note that SA refers to self-assessment).

Table 3. Formative Assessment 1: Slideshow first draft, student self-assessment (verbatim)

Student	Persuasive topic	SA overall mark	Slide show: strong points	Slide show: weak points	Things to work on for final version
Ikuko	Against GM foods	1 (weak)	- sources	- too many words on slides - few visuals - same titles for some slides - not enough slides	- I'd like to put many visuals, graphs and so on. I want to increase the number of slides because I want to find more information
Emi	In favor of School Uniforms	2 (average)	- good visuals	- few slides - point size is small - not enough evidence for support - a little confusing	- more, better evidence - more slides - content is clear
Sayaka	(Being) Conscious Consumers	2 (average)	- 'Buy Nothing Day' slides are fine	- Not enough explanation - Not enough visuals - Introduction is not interesting for audience - I need to explain the negative effects of huge consumerism - lack of citations and references page	- More on negative effects of consumerism - find more visuals - get more information to explain and introduce topic
Risa	Supporting Gay Adoption	3 (good)	- Chart and map are effective to explain topic and help audience to understand topic easily. - Basic information is also enough to explain topic.	- Have to analyze situation after adoption and focus more on adoptive children's issues	- I need more research about adoptive children, and I'd like to make my slides better in terms of visuals.

Black & Wiliam (1998) contend that self-assessment is an essential component of FA but they also importantly point out that students “can only assess themselves when they have a sufficiently clear picture of the targets that their learning is meant to attain” (p.9). In this case the rubric criteria identifies the key elements for an effective slideshow and a sufficiently clear target picture is presented for students to compare their slideshows against. The rubric criteria also provide information in how their work may be improved (for example, ‘sources of information are properly cited’). Students were explicitly reminded that that exactly the same criterion would be used to grade the final version of their slides, as they use here in this ‘practice run’. The importance of the formative use of student self-assessment is captured by Sadler (1989); “A key premise is that for students to be able to improve, they must develop the capacity to monitor the quality of their own work during actual production” (p. 119). This first formative assessment

encourages such monitoring as students work toward producing their best final version of their slideshows.

2. Teacher assessment (formative)

After completing their self-assessments, the first drafts of the slideshows were collected for teacher assessment and the provision of feedback. The feedback, provided in the next class a week later, included returned slideshows with marginal notations, questions or suggestions, including the use of a limited correction code (e.g. ? = not understood, **R**=rewrite). Attached to the returned first draft was the teacher's version of the slideshow rubric, with the added 'comments' section.

Table 4 shows teacher marks and feedback comments for the same four students in Table 1 above (note that TA refers to "teacher assessment").

Table 4. Formative Assessment 2, teacher feedback on slideshow first drafts

Student/ Topic	TA overall mark	Rubric comments
Ikuko - Against GM food	2 (average)	Your position on the issue is clearly given Ikuko, and you do present the other side also. You provide three main reasons but this could be more effectively done. Editing and revising should make the slides stronger and clearer. Pay attention to the items I have scored 2 and 1 (citations) above.
Emi - In favor of School Uniforms	2 (average)	A good start Emi, but the content needs to be a bit stronger and deeper. Are you focusing on the U.S.A? More factual information about the situation there would be useful (e.g. costs). More pictures of uniform types would also help, and better organization of your content (reasons why you are in favor of uniforms).
Sayaka - Being Conscious Consumers	1 (weak)	Content needs to be stronger in order to persuade people to be aware of/care about this issue. Lots of work to do to turn this into an effective slide show, Sayaka. Too much about 'Buy Nothing Day' – a third of your slides.
Risa - Supporting Gay Adoption	2 (average)	Some good parts, Risa (e.g. visuals), but the problem is the content is too informative and not persuasive enough. What are your arguments supporting gay adoption? Make them stronger and clearer for the audience.

Readers will note some discrepancies between teacher and student first draft scoring, including a higher teacher assessment (for Ikuko), and lower teacher assessment for both Sayaka and Risa. This may be explained by the fact that, while being familiar with the key components in an effective slideshow, the student's self-assessment was the first time for them to see the criterion in one rubric. It may be that the teacher has a firmer grasp of the key components and looked at slideshows with a more critical eye. Perhaps these students do not yet share a concept of quality roughly similar to that held by the teacher (Sadler 1989).

The key consideration here is directing formative feedback "towards 'closing the gap' between present understanding and the learning aimed for" (James, 2002, p. 5). Students need to see what needs to be improved in order to raise their performance (slideshow effectiveness) prior to submitting the summative version for grading. While the teacher commentary should provide useful feedback, assessment on individual parts of the rubric (for example, a mark of 1 (weak) or 2 (average) indicates to students where they need to focus their attention in order to be scored higher in the summative assessment to follow. Gusky (2003) notes that: "Teachers who develop useful assessments, provide corrective instruction, and give students second chances to demonstrate success can improve their instruction and help students learn" (p.6). This point in the assessment process enables teachers to see what needs to be focused on for the purposes of re-teaching or focusing further attention on. Noting areas that scored 1 (weak) or 2 (average) in teacher assessment of student slides showed that key areas that needed to be improved upon were content, writing mechanics and citation of sources. In particular, the first draft of student slides often contained a lot of informative content, but lacked in persuasive reasons for taking a position and making these reasons explicit for the audience on the slides. These areas were re-focused on in the two subsequent lessons following the return of the first drafts and the teacher feedback.

After returning the teacher assessment at the beginning of the following class, time was made for re-teaching and then students worked on editing and revising. The following two classes followed a similar pattern and there was approximately three weeks between the formative and final summative assessments. This was time enough to make necessary changes and close the gaps that exist between the first version of slides and the ideal final version, as specified in the rubric criterion.

The two formative assessments described here are an attempt to promote a situation described by Wood (1987, 242) in which 'the teacher/tester and the student *collaborate* actively to produce the best performance' (emphasis in the original).

Part B. The Summative Assessment

As the summative assessment day arrives, the teacher must put aside this 'active collaboration' with students, and put some distance between themselves and the students while putting on the judge/assessor hat. This can be a very challenging transition to make after spending month in helping, guiding and supporting students. Nevertheless there comes a time when,

"Formative assessment must at some point-or points- give rise to a summative assessment of achievement at a predetermined stage of the learning process. Eventually formative assessment, which forms the platform for teaching in a course, must give rise to measurement of desired learning outcomes" (Dunn, et al., 2004, 74).

On the day of the final presentation, the focus was on student's performance and, as mentioned, they were separately graded on this most important element of the final presentation (worth 30% of the final grade). At the end of the three final presentation sessions, students submitted the final drafts of their slides, those used during their performance, for the summative assessment. Approximately a week later students were able to pick up both assessments from the departmental office. Table 5 below gives a summary of the final grades and teacher commentary of their PowerPoint slideshows of the four students previously mentioned. While the same evaluation criteria were used a different scoring range was used (from 3 to 10), offering a finer scale of options for the grading of the final edition of the slides.

Table 5. Summative Assessment: Slides show Grades (final drafts).

Scoring framework: **Weak** (3-4), **Average/OK** (5-6), **Good** (7-8), **Very Good** (9-10)

Student/topic	Presentation slide show score	Teacher comments
Ikuko - Against GM food	8 (Good)	A persuasive argument is effectively presented on the slides, with a good selection of visuals. Better editing and organizing of content and better writing mechanics would have made it even stronger. A good slide show, Ikuko.
Emi - In favor of School Uniforms	8 (Good)	A good slide show Emi, especially the visual elements. Organization of information and reasons for your position could have been a bit stronger and better.
Sayaka - Being Conscious Consumers	9 (Very Good)	Very good slide show Sayaka, which effectively supports your persuasive message to care about being conscious consumers. Good choice of supporting visuals also. Some textual elements could have been a bit clearer and easier to read.
Risa - Supporting Gay Adoption	9 (Very Good)	A strong slide show Risa, with great visuals. Reasons for your position are organized and easy to follow. But a little more background information about the issue would have made the slide show even stronger.

Many students (for example, Sayaka and Risa) made substantial improvements in their slideshows after the formative assessments of their first drafts. Wiliam and Leahy ((2007, 36) note “ A key issue in the design of assessment systems, if they are to function formatively as well as summatively, is the extent to which the system can respond in a timely manner to the

information made available". In the assessment system reported on here, students had time to assess their current level of performance, prior to the graded event, and make the necessary adjustments while it still counted.

According to Black (2003): "Summative tests should be, and be seen to be, a positive part of the learning process in which pupils come to see that tests are helpful to them, not merely, not even principally, ways of judging them" (p.16). The summative test discussed here, the assessment of the final draft of PowerPoint slideshows, had such an intention, as a positive helpful part of the learning process. While it did serve as an exercise in judging student it was principally intended to help students produce a better slideshow for their final presentation. I believe it was successful in doing that.

Part C. Assessment Synergy

The fact that the same slideshow criterion was used for all assessments is the glue that bonds the assessment versions together into a synergized whole.

Biggs (1998) contended that FA and SA are best connected when they are deeply criterion-referenced, specifying what counts for quality work.

In this situation, . . . where reflective learning takes place, the backlash from the summative assessment tool can be very positive. A condition is that that assessment is deeply criterion-referenced, incorporating the intended curriculum, which should be clearly salient in the perceived assessment demands. When that happens you get aligned instruction, where teaching to the test is exactly what you want because it is teaching the intended curriculum. . . . the summative assessment is defining the parameters for the formative assessment... (p.32).

That is what happened in this case, where the summative assessment rubric clearly defined, indeed was almost identical to, the two formative assessments used, and students constructed and adjusted their slideshows to the assessment criterion specified.

Gusky (2003) makes a similar point:

If the test is the primary determinant of what teachers teach and how they teach it, then we are indeed "teaching to the test." But if desired learning goals are the foundation of students' instructional experiences, then assessments of student learning are simply extensions of those same goals. Instead of "teaching to the test," teachers are more accurately "testing what they teach." (p.7).

As noted earlier, after the first semester of the Public Presentations course, a desire and need for more student attention was paid to the improvement of student slideshows. This desire resulted in the modification of the final presentation assessment into two components, the slideshow and the performance, rather than just one. By isolating the slideshow element like this a new assessment diet was constructed aimed at improved students performance through a series of three assessments steps; self-assessment, teacher assessment (both formative) and the final summative assessment. In this way, assessment originally designed for summative purposes can

was converted into formative-purposed assessment for learning (James, 2002).

The assessment process described here shows formative and summative assessment working together in tandem, and this synergy did result in improved student learning and improved teacher instruction about the construction of effective presentation slideshows. The synchronized process described here is an example of an assessment system that is balanced and integrated to promote student success.

In their Student Assessment Handbook, Dunn et al. (2004, p. 18) write that in an ideal situation, SA should come at the conclusion of a series of systematic and incremental learning activities which have FA tasks set at key points along the way. In such a system, the FA tasks are “interwoven with the teaching and learning activities”, and followed by a summative task in place.

This is a good description of what happened in this case, and this report concludes that a synergy of formative and summative assessment was achieved to promote, maximize, and then measure, student learning in this EFL university course in Tokyo.

V. Conclusion

It has been asserted that if they are to support learning, assessments must not just be isolated events but happen in an ongoing, interconnected series (Stiggins, 2006). The formative and summative assessment processes described here demonstrate such ongoing interconnectivity. Such a “synergy of assessment” led to improved student learning, more focused teaching, and more effective student-centered assessment in this course.

It has also been noted that the primary goal of assessment is to support the improvement of learning and teaching (Frederickson & Collins, 1989). This report about a process of formative and summative assessment synergy in an EFL public speaking course at a Japanese university also describes a “synergy of learning” - students learned more about effective slideshow construction, and the teacher/author learned more about both effective teaching and assessing, and the multiple interconnections that should exist between them in engineering a learning-centered classroom environment.

Finally, as this report notes, there are few examples in the literature of synergizing formative and summative assessments in EFL/ESL classrooms. I would like to encourage professional colleagues and researchers to explore and publish in this rich area that interconnects formative and summative assessment, teaching, and, always of primary importance, student learning.

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Appendix A1 Formative Assessment 1- Student Self-Assessment (Part 1)

Student Name: Yuka Topic: Abortion

4 = very good	3 = good	2 = average	1 = weak
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Criteria	Rating				
Introduction	Introduction presents the overall topic and draws the audience into the presentation. It is clear, coherent and interesting.	4	3	2	1
Content (most important)	Information is accurate and serves the purpose of <u>persuading</u> the audience. The content is clear and concise with a logical progression of ideas and supporting information.	4	3	2	1
Text elements	Fonts, point size and colors make text easy to read. Text is easy to follow and understand.	4	3	2	1
Layout	The layout is visually pleasing and contributes to the overall message with appropriate use of headings, sub-headings and white-space. Not cluttered or confusing.	4	3	2	1
Graphics/visuals	Graphics/visuals assist in presenting an overall theme and enhance understanding of concepts, ideas, etc.	4	3	2	1
Writing Mechanics	The text is clearly written with no/few errors in grammar, vocabulary, spelling. Easy to read and understand.	4	3	2	1
Citations	Sources of information are properly cited so audience can determine credibility and authority of the information	4	3	2	1
	Slideshow: Overall evaluation (first draft)	4	3	2	1

➔

Appendix A2 Formative Assessment 1- Student Self Assessment (Part 2)

Part 2

Make some notes (bullet points are fine) in the following boxes about your slideshow (what looks good, weaknesses, things to work on).

Strong points:

- Font size
- Photos (visual aids). ← but I should include other photos.
-

Weak Points:

- Introduction is not enough to gain more attention and interests from audience.
- Contents are not so clear.
- Organization is not easy to follow and not easy to understand
↳ not effective.
- No work consulted page and No in-text citation

Things to work on for the final version:

- Put more interesting introduction before "What is abortion?" page.
- I found other useful information and material, so I change all my contents page. and make it more effective by using examples.
- I'll finish to make work consulted page and citation.

Appendix B Formative Assessment 2- Instructor Feedback

Slideshow (First Draft) **Instructor Evaluation**

Student Name: YuKa Topic: Abortion

[4 = very good 3 = good 2 = average 1 = weak]

Criteria		Rating			
Introduction	Introduction presents the overall topic and draws the audience into the presentation. It is clear, coherent and interesting.	4	3	2	1
Content (most important)	Information is accurate and serves the purpose of persuading the audience. The content is clear and concise with a logical progression of ideas and supporting information.	4	3	2	1
Text elements	Fonts, point size and colors make text easy to read. Text is easy to follow and understand.	4	3	2	1
Layout	The layout is visually pleasing and contributes to the overall message-with appropriate use of headings, sub-headings and white-space. Not cluttered or confusing.	4	3	2	1
Graphics/visuals	Graphics/visuals assist in presenting an overall theme and enhance understanding of concepts, ideas, etc.	4	3	2	1
Writing Mechanics	The text is clearly written with no/few errors in grammar, vocabulary, spelling. Easy to read and understand.	4	3	2	1
Citations	Sources of information are properly cited so audience can determine credibility and authority of the information	4	3	2	1
	Slideshow: Overall evaluation (first draft)	4	3	2	1

Comments: A good first draft, YuKa. It looks like an interesting presentation and the visuals work well. Stronger, a bit deeper content in favor of a woman's right to choose would make it even better. Work on citations also.

Appendix C Summative Assessment- Slide show final draft

Persuasive speech: Slideshow evaluation

[4 = very good 3 = good 2 = average 1 = weak]

Criteria		Rating			
1. Introduction	Introduction presents the overall topic and draws the audience into the presentation. It is clear, coherent and interesting.	4	3	2	1
2. Content (most important element)	Information is accurate and serves the purpose of persuading the audience. The content is clear and concise with a logical progression of ideas and supporting information.	4	3	2	1
3. Text elements	Fonts, point size and colors make text easy to read. <u>Text is easy to follow and understand.</u>	4	3.5	2	1
4. Layout	The layout is visually pleasing and contributes to the overall message with appropriate use of headings, sub-headings and white-space. Not cluttered or confusing.	4	3	2	1
5. Graphics/visuals	Graphics/visuals assist in presenting an overall theme and enhance understanding of concepts, ideas, etc.	4	3	2	1
6. Writing Mechanics	The text is clearly written with no/few errors in grammar, vocabulary, spelling. Easy to read and understand.	4	3	2	1
7. Citations	Sources of information are properly cited so audience can determine credibility and authority of the information	4	3	2	1

Weak (3-4) Average/OK (5-6) Good (7-8) Very Good (9-10)

Overall Slideshow score: 9 / 10

Comments: A very good slideshow Yuka, with strong persuasive content and good choice of text elements and layout. The slideshow works well to effectively support the presentation. Some language use could have been smoother and clearer (e.g. title slide, "approval for").