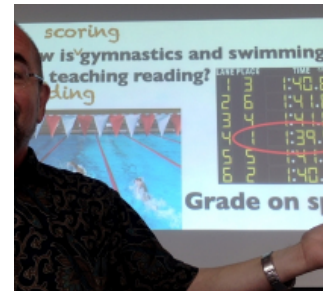
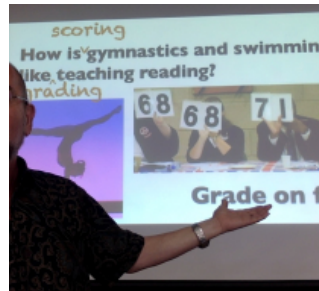
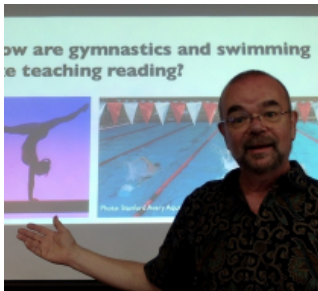




https://cop.elprograms.org/cop-highlights/testing-reading-and-search-right-metaphor-%E2%80%93-specialist-viewpoint?fbclid=IwAR3umBkVzy9gfBNzRw785ASd78q7Fm1d5p4tPqwYJ83U7_IMITuRCm9J9n0

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Testing reading and a search for the right metaphor - a specialist viewpoint



Details

Name Marc Helgesen

Participant type Specialist

Calendar Year 2019

City, Country of Activity Java, Indonesia

Activity Date Tuesday, April 23, 2019 to Monday, May 6, 2019

Activity Type Teacher Training

Number of Participants More than 100

Key Audience Primary School Teachers Secondary School Teachers University Professors Ministry of Education

Government/Partnering Organizations Local Teachers Organization

DOS Programs/Resources Used None/None of the Above

Description

Activity Description - Supporting U.S. Department of State Reporting and Outreach

This is a reflection on the 2019 Extensive Reading Roadshow in Indonesia. We did workshops for over 600 teachers throughout Java.

In Your Own Words - Describe Your Experience

Testing is one of those topics that everyone assumes they understand. Many people, even many teachers, really don't.

Lots of people think test results ought to have a bell-curve-shaped distribution. That is true when we are comparing students to each other. Tests like the TOEIC or TOEFL take that role. But most of the tests we give as language teachers should be criterion-referenced. That is, we should be testing the students on how well they learned whatever it is they were supposed to learn. In my own teacher development classes, I sometimes use the example of getting a drivers' license: You go to drivers' education class, study the manual, practice. If, however, the day you show up for the test, Danica Patrick (the most successful American female race car driver ever) is taking the test, that doesn't mean you should fail. She's a better driver than you or I will ever be, but that has nothing to do with your ability to pass the test.

The complexity of testing gets even more difficult with Extensive Reading (ER). ER means learners reading a lot of easy, enjoyable books. In an ideal world, reading would be its own reward. In the real world, most of us need to give grades. Students are busy and have other priorities. The grade is often a motivating reward. But with Extensive Reading, we want them reading many thousands of words. They are working on fluency. They are reading quickly, not worrying about all the details in a story.

One tool for grading ER is MReader.org. This is a free, on-line service that tests whether or not students have actually read the books they say they've read. It is sponsored by the Extensive Reading Foundation (ERFoundation.org) and has quizzes for over 6500 graded readers. The quizzes have simple questions. They are not trying to evaluate deep comprehension. They are just asking, "Did you really read the book?"

In April and May of this year, Dr. Tom Robb (chair of the Extensive Reading Foundation (ERF) and creator of MReader.org and I (also part of the ERF) were part of the Extensive Reading Roadshow which did day-long workshops throughout Java, Indonesia. Also presenting were members of the Indonesian Extensive Reading Association (IERA) which added a "yes, this really does work here" element to the sessions. The roadshow was sponsored by the US Embassy - Indonesia and organized by RELO Bradley Horn.

One morning a few days into the tour, at breakfast we were talking about how things were going. We had been talking to hundreds of teachers and the response was positive, but I didn't feel the part about testing was as strong as I wanted it to be. Someone suggested comparing it to scoring Olympic sports: "Regular" English testing is kind of like scoring gymnastics. Form is paramount, not unlike grammar, function

and vocabulary on English tests. Swimming, on the other hand, is all about speed. Better or worse form may impact an athlete's time, but speed is all the judges are checking. Just like, with Extensive Reading, the huge number of words the learner reads should be the basis for a grade. ER is about building fluency. With fluency comes understanding. And with that understanding, reading can become its own reward.

I changed a few slides. In the next workshop, I asked the audience how testing English was like scoring gymnastics and/or swimming. The teachers came up with the answers I was looking for. Essentially, they filled in the blanks in the metaphor.

(Thanks to Brad Horn, Tom Robb and the IERA - especially Lhaksmita Wibowo for all the work on the Roadshow. It may have been Tom, an avid swimmer, who came up with the Olympic metaphor.)
