

Is the use of a multiple-choice group quiz as a plenary an effective method of assessment for learning?

	Target	What I have done in this assignment.
Target 1	Read more widely around the subject. Apply Harvard referencing guidelines consistently throughout your work.	I read more about the topic and engaged with the research. Exploited the University tools to deepen the research and applied critical thinking.
Target 2	Ensure that theory is applied to all aspects of your work.	Every method explained has been double checked and compared with the existing literature.
Target 3	Criticality must be developed rather than descriptive writing.	According to the requirement a job of research and academic writing has been done.

Introduction

My partner and I chose to analyse the utility of Assessment for Learning (AFL) in our respective subjects. We focused on the characteristics of one plenary: group quizzes. These tests, according to our experience, are considered enjoyable by the pupils. The aim of the research, therefore, is to state if other than just fun these quizzes help the students to learn further and thus are an effective method of AFL.

The main purpose of the research is to discover whether group quizzes as a plenary is an effective method of AFL which helps teachers and students to improve the average understanding of a subject, or if the plenary assessment just confuses the students without leading them anywhere.

We planned to observe our classes (year 7 and year 8) respectively using the famous template, "Who wants to be a millionaire?" which gave the students four choices of what the answer could be. We also allowed the students to work in groups to see if teamwork is useful for individual learning. Throughout this quiz we were able to analyse the class reactions, if students have improved during the entire lesson and how much of that lesson they remember.

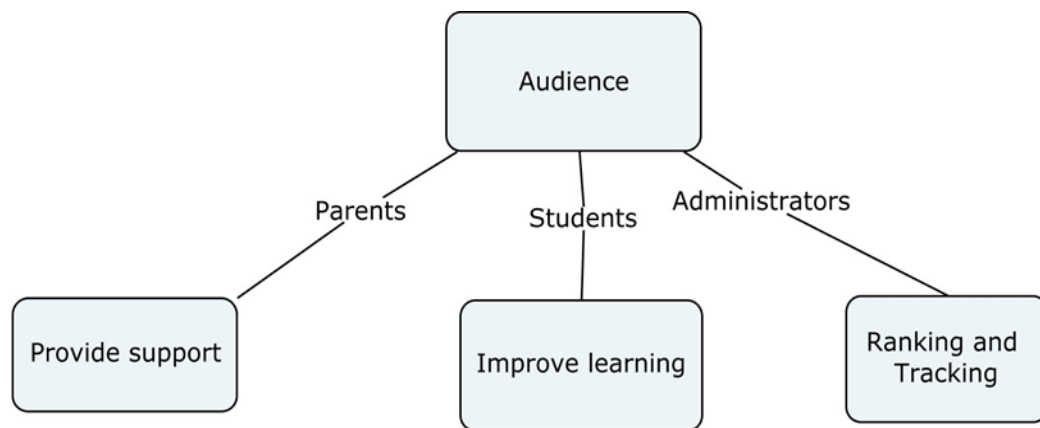
Research context

The aim of this research is to practice and consequently demonstrate the importance of professional development through research (lesson study) and the consequent teachers' learning. The aim of professional development (PD) is to help the teachers to develop and submit high quality lessons to the students (Garet, *et al.*, 2001). It has been pointed out that PD can be conceived as "traditional", whereas workshops and seminars are involved or "non-traditional" which includes learning circles, practitioner inquiries and collaborative lesson planning (Harfitt, *et al.*, 2019). In this specific case the research has a non-traditional approach and it focuses on one exact element that is part of the lesson's body: AFL. PD is essential because it shows fresh opportunities to learn new teaching methods, which can involve collaborations or personal research, access to alternative ideas and observe them in action (Garet, *et al.*, 2001). There is a huge amount of literature on PD but the common link between all of the research is definitely the desire to reach "effective teaching" (Lotter, *et al.*, 2018). This technique results to be fundamental for our PTE because is part of a learning process to become successful teachers.

Literature Review

AFL is one of the criteria used to indicate the quality of teaching (Starkie & Romero, 2011). Moreover, AFL is an element used to improve the teaching level and to help the students to understand where they are and where they need to be (Black and Wiliam, 1998). AFL is not a unique element placed at a certain point of a lesson, it is always followed or it follows the formative assessment, it is another technique that teachers can use to guide the students in the right direction during the lesson (Black, *et al.*, 2003). It can involve many different methods: starting from simple praise of the pupils to a more complex way of action and it can be repeated many times during the class (Black, *et al.*, 2003). On the contrary the AFL is considered a specific part of a lesson, made to better understand the general knowledge and understanding of the pupils.

It has been pointed out by Paul Black (2003) that the use of AFL will definitely improve lessons and it would change the distribution of effort. In other words, this will differentiate the method of AFL from working smarter rather than working harder, which is considered an improvement for teachers and for students considering as well that the practice of AFL will change the class environment making teachers and students both more satisfied (Black, *et al.*, 2003). In general AFL is a technique that helps teachers and students to give and receive information (Zhang & Zheng, 2018). Feedback is the element which helps students get where they need to be, according as well to what Black and William (1998) wrote. The union of these two notions (the awareness of the students and the feedback from the teacher) creates a right learning environment to help learners and teachers to improve. Nevertheless, AFL takes advantage of different techniques to make the acknowledgment of the students fairer and more productive. There are self and peer assessments, feedback and establishing expectations of students, learning level and assessment criteria (DeLuca & Klinger, 2010); hence these methods will involve in the process not only the students and the teachers, but also the administrators and the parents who need to keep track of their children to help outside of the institution, if needed. The following diagram shows the people involved in this process and the role that everyone covers.



(Fu *et al.*, 2018)

This is why AFL needs to be considered a relevant element in the school environment, because it involves everyone in the system and helps the general improvement of the staff and the students, raising the standards of the school (Fu *et al.*, 2018).

AFL is a process that involves both teachers and students, where the teachers have the job to gather more information where possible about the students, to help them to get to the point needed to achieve their goals (Alquraan & Al-Shaqsi, 2019). AFL helps the learning because it leads the teacher to understand the general level of the classroom and the weaknesses of the students, similarly the students have the chance, through the different ways of acknowledgement of their level or comprehension, to understand where they have to improve and also how to do so. (Alquraan & Al-Shaqsi, 2019). More specifically, AFL will help teachers in developing their assessment practices in order to improve the students' way of learning (Philhower, 2018).

It is important to highlight the existence of a difference between formative assessment and summative assessment. It has been mentioned before that the formative assessment has the main role to test the understanding of the students throughout the class (Black, *et al.*, 2003), moreover it is necessary to add the definition of summative assessment whose utility is mainly to rank or certify a competence (Weeden & Simmons, 2018).

The use of both of these techniques is essential to balance the feedback for the students. There is a solid definition that clarifies the essentiality of this method, it explains in fact, that the formative assessment should help the students to get prepared for the summative assessment (Taras, 2005). Besides the results from the summative assessments can help to achieve goals in the AFL (National research council, 2001). It is clearer now why we do need to use AFL in our classes and why we focus our attention on this particular aspect. It is safe

to say that the research helped both teachers involved in this study to understand how to deal with their classes in a future necessity of an AFL.

Lesson study design

According to Lewis (2002) the lesson study first took place in Japan. Lewis (2002) states that the Japanese improved their methods in teaching through the use of this innovative method named “search lessons”, which occurred within school lessons and public lessons, many of which were videotaped for further analysis. The new study developed the four main features of these types of research, the same features have been mirrored in our personal research:

1. a shared long-term goal, also identified as “research focus” or “research theme” which is usually a theme that can be applied to every subject. That is why our personal research aim is focused on the effectiveness of some specific plenary activities which can be easily applied to every subject.
2. Important lesson content, in this case it is required a specific target such as a student with issues or a teacher which has difficulties to teach. Nevertheless, in our research the specific target was the class in its entirety, this is because we needed to understand the effectiveness of a method (AFL). We then observed the general behavior of the students in the class environment which consequently responds to the third point of the study: careful study of the students, which is also the reason why this research was made, to deliver effective lessons to the students.
- The fourth point: “live observation of lessons” which is the core of the study, allowing the teachers to compare and improve their lessons and have a different point of view - usually the lessons are videotaped as well, and some photographs are taken. In our specific case, each researcher observed the other to study the class behavior and the reaction of the students to the plenary proposed for our research.

Lewis (2002), was not the only one to focus her attention to this type of research. A study lead by Murata and Takahashi (2002) in Japan, showed not only that the lesson study is a good system to improve lessons and facilitate students learning, but it is a strong aid for student teachers and teachers to become more confident. Below it is possible to observe the general scheme that Murata and Takahashi (2002) drew in his research which represents the “lesson study circle”. Our research followed this type of procedure.

According to another important scholar, the lesson study has a fundamental role in the classroom and in teachers’ life, what Dudley (2014) describes is the ideal context to set a lesson study and make it work. He starts by declaring that the entire lesson had to be student-centered, a method that involves building on prior knowledge. Secondly the environment

should be challenging and stimulating, and thirdly the students should be informed immediately of their progress or if they have to improve in any area. As it is possible to notice, Dudley (2014) describes three general characteristics which have been mentioned before. Nevertheless, he adds the importance of “flexibility” which makes the lesson study in the professional learning communities unique adding a fundamental feature for the teachers that helps them to understand that they do not necessarily have to use all of those characteristics, but they have to choose according to the class’ necessities.

The lesson study took place in two classes year 7 and year 8 which were part of the professional teaching experience (PTE) in the school where the two student teachers were placed. Both the classes and the students were known to the teachers. Nevertheless, the three students we had to observe were chosen at random. A normal lesson was given in the target subject (French at first and for the second lesson Biology), the plenary on the contrary had been planned to match the goal of the research. It was a quiz-based plenary with a question and multiple choice. Two types of questionnaires have been used: one to observe the behavior of the three students chosen and the second one was an interview used at the end of the class to interview the three students involved. The questionnaires used have been the same for the two classes, what slightly changed was the quiz feature and the timing around it.

As mentioned before the teacher who observed the lesson had two types of documents, one was a checklist, the aim of this one was facilitating the observation during the lesson with a higher chance to collect more useful data during the ongoing lesson. The checklist (appendix 1) had set criteria aimed to help the student teacher in the observation of the three students and to make sure that all aspects were covered. In general, after the two observations, both student teachers decided to change some criteria in the list to make them more accurate to the environment witnessed. The second document (appendix 2) was a questionnaire composed by 6 questions to ask directly to the three students. The interview in general went well and all the information needed was collected. Yet, most of the time the students did not seem to be comfortable and even if it has been explained to them several times during the interview, they were still feeling the pressure of what they were answering. Nonetheless, the second document did not change between an observation and another because it revealed to be perfectly suitable to the situation and for the research.

The following reflection has been built on the literature on the lesson studies, lectures in University and on the data collected during the study.

The non-participant observations were collected by the second student teacher in the class who was there with the purpose to closer observe the class environment and how the students coped with the AFL. The student teacher either sat in a corner of the class and noted their observation on the research papers or walked around to have a better perspective of some pupils in the class.

For the purpose of our lesson study, the focus groups, chosen at random, were picked as a sample to have the point of view of the students on the effectiveness of this AFL. The six questions on the document have been made specifically to understand the level of engagement of the pupils, their general understanding and their opinion on the quiz provided. The data used to interview the students were qualitative, six open questions printed on 2-A4 pages. The questions have been asked orally and the students had the chance to express their understanding through the traffic light method, in this way they had the possibility to express what they thought in a more precise way. Moreover, in both interviews we received just simple answers as just “yes” or “no”, the first group especially was not very keen to give further explanations.

Lesson study 1 results and analysis

The first lesson was a French lesson based on a new topic for year 8: the body parts. This kind of lesson seemed to be perfect for the research, because it made it possible to base the quiz on a new knowledge and would have allowed us to test how much pupils had mastered during this specific lesson. It is important to highlight how the year group involved in the research belongs to band A, which means that the pupils in the class were highly responsive and keen to learn, without getting distracted too much. The main goal of the lesson was to introduce the basic vocabulary related to the body parts. For the occasion, a power point was created to lead the classroom and to help them to remember all the new words. The teacher started by showing them facial parts and involved the class in a memory game to help the students to get confident with the new words and to facilitate the AFL exercise planned for the end. The second part of the lesson was based on the vocabulary of the body from the neck to the feet. In this case the exercises for the students were more than the first part because there were more things to remember. For this reason, other than the memory game, the pupils have been asked to complete two exercises on the topic booklet. During the entire lesson, it was evident that the majority of the students were focused and genuinely interested on the topic. Nevertheless, a small part of the class was talkative, in general it did not disturb the lesson

and every student seemed to understand and at least remembered the majority of the words introduced. The participation of the pupils was high, and the classroom responded to every question asked whether about prior knowledge or about the new topic. Many of the students demonstrated to be very enthusiastic and spontaneously did more work increasing the vocabulary knowledge. Some of them, in fact, learned how to say “teeth” for instance, just looking through the booklet and without the teacher’s requirement to do so. They demonstrated to have fun during the exercises and enjoyed the PowerPoint layout. Once they started the plenary, the class was divided into 5 groups and during the entire quiz only 2 mistakes have been noticed, demonstrating a high level of comprehension. The pupils’ success in the quiz was above expectations. Nevertheless, during the focus group, the three target students admitted that they would at least go through again some part of the lecture to better understand it. The three of them as well confessed to have independently participated to the quiz giving their contribution to the group, they also stated that they knew all the answers and that the quiz in general was quite easy.

After a long discussion with the second student teacher we decided on two main points needed to be improved for the second lesson. The first point being the timing in the quiz. The students had 30 seconds to respond to the question shown, we estimated that the time given was too long which let the students raise their hands holding the card with their answer and gave the time to the other groups to change the answer according to what they saw the other groups were doing. The second point involved the questions of the quiz, they were completely based on the new topic, and most of them were too easy, for this reason the groups answered correctly nearly 13-14 questions out of 15. For this reason, it has been decided that adding some questions on prior knowledge was necessary and also the level of question should have been higher and harder.

In this first part of the research, the results are already impressive. After attentive examination from the student teachers, it was discovered that some parts of the plenary needed to be changed to be more effective for the research and for the students too. Time management is the main concern in this specific case, it is very important to know when to start to give enough time to the students to understand the game and to get them quiet for the beginning. Nevertheless, if we have to consider the tools used for the observation, no problems have been encountered. The checklist facilitated the observation and helped the observer to focus on the three pupils in the classroom and the questions in the second document, the one for the focus group, were appropriate and enough to satisfy the curiosity of the researchers.

Lesson study 2 results and analysis

The second lesson study was a Biology class for year 7 Band A. In this case roles were reversed, and the prior observer became the main teacher. The lesson began with the register, after that the teacher started working on building on prior knowledge asking what the pupils remembered about the previous lesson. The students showed an enthusiastic interest in the topic and the majority of the class actively participated to the lesson and answered to the questions posed by the teacher. The three students, chosen again at random, showed different ranges of interest. Student one, was often daydreaming and distracted by small things around them (Appendix 8). During the revision of the previous lesson the student did not raise their hand to answer to any of the questions, similarly student two, at the beginning of the class was quite talkative and often disturbed their friends trying to involve them in something different, the student, triggered by the teacher tried to answer to some of the questions asked but often gave the wrong answer. On the contrary, student three was the most focused and from the beginning was attentive and concentrated on the tasks given. At the beginning the pupil tried to participate and answer to the questions, most of their answers were right and accurate. Following the core of the lesson, the three students observed were in general well behaved, the first one still quite distracted and unmotivated in completing the exercise, on the contrary the second one, even if still disruptive and distracted started completing their exercise straight away and seemed quite involved in the task, student 3 never stopped working and was autonomous from the beginning to the end of the lesson. The first student was helped by the teacher only once, after that little help the pupils started working alone completing the task in the time given, the second student as well after a first chat with the teacher completed the task successfully. During the AFL the three pupils have been placed in three different groups. This time on the contrary, the observer noticed how the first two pupils, were more active and participative than the third one who, probably due to timidity. The third student also did not participate much to the group quiz (even if on the interview it is stated the contrary). In general, the quiz was a success, all of the five groups in the class nearly achieved the same results with an average of 14 right answers out of 16.

During the focus group the three students confirmed to have understood the entire lesson without any particular problem. Nevertheless, it has been noticed that the pupils were not particularly keen to give long explanations, in general just short answers as “yes or no” have been collected. Another peculiarity that has been spotted is the fear of the pupils to tell the entire truth. For instance student three did not really participate to the group quiz, most of the time they were silent and looked afraid to give their contribution to the group, the only action

that has been noticed by the observer was the pupils raising their hands with the letter for the answer, however, student three admitted during the interview to have actively participated to the quiz and to know all the answers posed.

According to what has been observed, the only point that should be improved is the time for the focus group. Unfortunately, both of the classes observed were in between other lessons and the pupils couldn't really stop for a long time to answer the questions. For this reason, the answers collected in general, even if satisfactory, were short. The lesson study has been planned in every detail and in general we can state it was a success. The six pupils interviewed expressed their enthusiasm concerning the quiz, and all of them said it helped to revise the topic of the day and to fix in mind the new elements learned. Another possible change noted was perhaps the number of students in every class, to make the study more effective the classes should be composed by a smaller number of students, for example the first class was composed of 31 students, this did not help the division in groups and made the plenary a little bit chaotic. In the second class the number of the students was lower and the groups worked better together, the disposition of the desks was better than the first class where the students were sitting in couples for each desk, the desks were placed in five rows. On the contrary, the second class was composed by four tables, which allowed the students to gather around them and work better as a group. In general, for future improvements the lesson study should involve more classes (not only two) and smaller groups (even if this depends on the kind of activity proposed).

Nonetheless, this experience provided the opportunity to deepen a specific knowledge which will definitely be useful for the future and to improve some teaching skills. What as well came from the research, is the importance of plenaries for students and teachers as well. Plenaries allow the chance for everyone in the class to prove their knowledge, the quality of their knowledge and what and how to improve the lesson. What we learned as well is the value of research and how in the teaching world it is necessary for constant improvement.

Discussion of research findings

The research we carried out was the effectiveness of group quizzes as plenaries. What we found out, firstly, was that a sample of two classes is not necessarily enough to state the effectiveness or not of the topic chosen. Moreover, the time was not enough to collect more data and the focus group should have been longer and more specific. Nevertheless, what came out, was the general satisfaction of the students. The pupils stated that they find the plenaries fun. This is because they helped to change the class atmosphere and improved their

teamwork. Each of the six students interviewed confessed that a quiz like that definitely helps in revision and it is probably a faster method than homework, for instance. Nevertheless, the two researchers involved are not sure about the complete effectiveness of the group quizzes as such because has been noticed a different level of attention from student to student. The double observation (coming from the student teacher observation and from the three students interviewed) showed some discrepancies between the behavior observed and the answers obtained.

For my class, according to my colleague's notes and the students' answers, this research will help to make slight changes in the way of explaining a topic and to present a plenary. Sometimes the importance of this one is underestimated. If a plenary is not explained right to the class, it will not be understood, and the effect predicted will not be the same. In the first class for example, the time remaining for the plenary was not enough, the explanation took too long and at the start of the game, some students were confused. In this way the revision is not effective, and the group quiz does not work. In general comparing the first lesson to the second one, we stated that a group quiz and plenary should be used to revise an entire topic not just one aspect of the topic (like lesson one) because it makes the quiz restrictive and easier to answer, especially if the class belongs to a Band A. Finally, the group quiz will be probably used again, but just at the conclusion of a topic, to test the prior knowledge and state that the class is ready to move on.

The strengths of the method are definitely the effectiveness and the pace which makes it possible to collect qualitative data. The peculiarity of the lesson study involves many people: such as teachers and students, making it practical and concrete. The method can be applied to everything, in this case has been used to analyze a specific section of the lesson, but as we saw with Lewis and Murata it can be used as well to analyze teachers' methods and improve their weaknesses.

According to Fernandez *et al.*, (2003) one of the problems of the lesson study is definitely the ability to master it. This method has been defined as easy to learn in fact, but quite hard to put in practice. Furthermore, focus groups and collaborative works can be seen as bias because the teacher might feel the pressure to minimize the conflicts (Stepanek *et al.*, 2007).

Conclusion

The method of collecting data was the same suggested in the research of lesson studies, there are questionnaires and checklists like in this specific case but sometimes, there is the

possibility to collect pictures and videotapes of the classes observed. Generally, the collection of data in this situation can be considered quite reliable. The only thing that makes it not completely reliable is the focus group, as has already explained before the children were not completely comfortable and they did not give long answers to the questions as was expected, more than once they had to be triggered by one of the student teachers. Nevertheless, the second part of the research, that involves the “reflection on teaching” and the “modify the plan to teach” emerged to be useful and the data collected seemed to be enough to bring the right corrections for the second lesson.

According to the various existing literature about this method and the growing positive effects especially in Japan and USA the method is valid, but it can be considered valid only if it involves a high number of participants to the research. According to one of the Japanese studies lead by Murata and Takashi (2002) the teachers involved were 125 for instance, hence considering as well one of the Malaysian studies that have been lead, the people involved even in this case were 10 teachers and 60 students (Matanluk *et al.*, 2013). These numbers compared to the one in our research are higher and lead to major results. On the contrary, the chance to analyze only 50 students with two teachers does not seem enough to state an effective result on the specific topic chosen that anyway made us reflect on the actual effectiveness of this type of plenary.

For this reason, I do not believe these specific findings can be generalised in a specific statement. According to the students interviewed and the notes taken during the observation both the student teachers agreed on the utility of group quizzes but only for very specific situations. For instance, it has been noted that the use of the group quiz after a lesson on a new topic does not seem to be particularly useful because the students were quite reactive during the entire lessons and the amount of questions possible to ask are limited as well making the game easier, quite the reverse after the observation of the second lesson it seemed definitively more effective the quiz based on prior knowledge with some new questions.

According to this research, in the future placement the lesson focus will be on the well-being of the students and their comprehension of the topic. To do so different methods will be applied correctly to the AFL, thus Formative and summative assessment will be used more frequently to make the lessons more consistent and to adapt them to the students needs.

The research has also helped to structure my future teaching method and to grow as a teacher. Awareness has been acquired and it can be said that to be more skilled and prepared to apply effectively the new curriculum in schools.

Recommendations

For future research it would be suggested to take more time and collect more data to be able to write further on the subject. According to the results that came out it seems to be a good suggestion to make sure that every teacher should be aware of their class' level and to take care of everyone, assessing the students not as a punishment but with the intent to grow together and improve the knowledge on the subject. More specifically to improve the method, use both to teach and to learn and to keep on track the students and the teachers as well.

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