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Name: Yan Tsoi Lam

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Tutor: Dr. Wong Ming Har, Ruth

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A project entitled

***The Learning Process of a Pre-service Teacher in Implementing  
Performance-based Assessment in an English Language Classroom***

Submitted by

**YAN, Tsoi Lam**

submitted to the Education University of Hong Kong for the degree of  
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## Declaration

I, YAN, Tsoi Lam, declare that this research report represents my own work under the supervision of Dr. WONG, Ming Har Ruth, and that it has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution.

YAN, Tsoi Lam  
10<sup>th</sup> May 2020

## **The Learning Process of a Pre-service Teacher in Implementing Performance-based Assessment in an English Language Classroom**

### **Abstract**

Adopting an action research approach, the present study explores the challenges in implementing performance-based assessment (PBA) in a Hong Kong band three secondary school English language classroom and how a pre-service teacher overcame them. The pre-service teacher, who was also the researcher of the present study, implemented PBA in her English language classrooms to understand more about her own teaching and facilitate her own professional development through the research process. The data was systematically collected through video recordings of the lessons and the teacher's reflective journal. A qualitative inductive approach was used to analyse the data. A second rater who is a teacher of the teacher training programme assisted the teacher in her reflective process and ensure reliability of the application process of action research. Thus, the field experience supervision feedback forms were collected as supplementary data too. Since students are an important stakeholder of the teaching and learning experience, to enhance learner agency, their feedback on implementing PBA was also taken into consideration. Student questionnaires were distributed, and the results was quantitatively analysed. Findings revealed that time constraints, the pre-service teacher's limited knowledge and skills, insufficient external support and students' low ability and motivation were the difficulties in the process of implantation of PBA. Therefore, the pre-service teacher added teaching steps, enhanced her instruction and feedback and diverse the grouping and topics to address those challenges. These results provided insights for teacher educators on what support student-teachers need when learning PBA in teacher training programmes and how curriculum innovations such as PBA can be better implemented in schools. The findings also implied that in-service teachers need to be aware of the backwash effects of PBA when implementing this new assessment method in their language arts classroom.

**Keywords:** Pre-service teacher, Performance-based assessment, Action research

## Introduction

Since the revamp of Hong Kong Secondary School Curriculum in 2007, Language Arts (LA) was given a more prominence role in the English Language Senior Secondary Curriculum (CDC, 2004; CDC & HKEAA, 2007). However, school teachers have not been able to fully achieve the aims of integrating LA which is enhancing students' experience with imaginative and creative appeal of language (Li, 2012; Tong, 2011). Biggs (2003) and Tong (2011) suggested a gulf between curriculum orientations and assessment method to be the main cause. Thus, Tong (2011) introduced performance-based assessment (PBA) in her study to bridge the gap. Though her study included English teachers from diverse school backgrounds, the research was done from a top-down approach and only focused on teachers' perception and methods in executing LA assessment. There was little specific and detailed documentation of the challenges those teachers faced during the implementation of PBA and how they overcame them. The investigator who is also the participant of the current study is interested in exploring the difficulties in implementing the suggested pedagogy and how pre-service teachers can overcome them. Drawing on data from the pre-service teacher's reflective journals, lesson videos, supervision forms and questionnaires from students, the study reports the pre-service teacher's difficulties in implementing PBA and how she modified her teaching to overcome them. Such a focus on the pre-service teacher's learning process of implementing PBA can contribute to our discussion on the inadequacies of teacher knowledge on PBA, backwash effect on student's learning and classroom discipline problems that occur; and generate practical implications for in-service teachers, teacher educators and school leaders on how to promote curriculum innovations such as PBA in teacher training programmes and local schools.

## **Literature review**

### Previous Research on PBA

Though performance-based assessment (PBA) has been introduced in the academic field for more than 30 years, there has been minimum studies on it. Previous research on PBA were mostly done outside Hong Kong, a large amount of them in the USA. The only one that had some relevance to the Hong Kong context was Tong (2011), in which she advocated the implementation of PBA for assessing Language Arts in the NSS curriculum. However, no research has followed up on her idea in terms of how PBA is actually implemented in Hong Kong classrooms, the challenges of implementation and how pre-service teachers learn to use PBA. To the research's knowledge, none of the research done worldwide had a focus on pre-service teachers, not to mention pre-service teacher's learning process of implementing PBA. Some previous studies had a focus on teachers' and students' perception on implementing PBA (Kirmizi & Komec,2016; Tong, 2011), some emphasized on how PBA benefits linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms (Lee, 1998) and some studied the washback effects of PBA (Sumardi, 2017). Others just provided examples of how PBA was applied in the classroom (Afflerbach et.al, 1994; Mc Tighe & Ferrara, 1998; Soto et.al, 2017).

### Learning Process of Pre-service Teachers

Previous studies recommended more staff development for in-service teachers in terms of how to effectively select and implement formative assessment methods in the classrooms (Commeyras, 1992; Kirmizi & Komec,2016). That being said, such training for pre-service teachers are equally important and should not be overlooked. For example, in the 5-year teacher-training programme the present investigator is enrolled in, teaching methods like performance-based assessment are taught in year three. In this case, it was introduced to pre-

service teachers in the course *Secondary ELT Curriculum* in one of the 3-hour session. Pre-service teachers were first given academic articles on the topic before class. Key concepts of PBA were recapped during the lecture, with tutorial tasks accompanying the explanation so pre-service teachers could experience PBA first-hand. During year five, they get the opportunity to try out what they have learnt in authentic local secondary school classrooms in their full-semester teaching practicum.

### Challenges of Pre-service Teachers during Field Experience

Field experience is an important component of a teacher training programme. For the first time, pre-service teachers are exposed to classroom realities (Knowles, Coles, & Presswood, 1994). With their dual roles as a student and a teacher, they face challenges in terms of teaching, workplace adaptation, learning and more. Pre-service teachers encounter difficulties in connecting theories to practice. Liu (2005)'s study reveals that pre-service teachers tend to follow the school culture which is exam-oriented in practice. It appears to contradict with the communicative language teaching ideologies advocated in their teacher training programme education. Being in the classroom for the first time, student teachers also face other teaching-related issues such as managing classroom discipline, finding ways to enhance students' motivation, catering for learner diversity and at the same time, polishing their teaching techniques (Long, 1997). All the above difficulties faced by pre-service teachers in their field experience may contribute to the challenges in implementing PBA because they become pre-occupied by those issues and may have less mental compacity to implement curriculums like PBA. Despite the possible challenges, pre-service teachers are still encouraged to implement PBA during field experience because of its numerus benefits to teaching and learning.

## Performance-based Assessment

Performance-based assessment (PBA) is an authentic formative assessment which focuses on high-order thinking, constructed responses and integrativeness (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996; Pierce, 2002). It shows a more comprehensive picture of students' ability in terms of the content knowledge and the generic skills they use in authentic tasks where English is employed as means of communication (Mc Tighe & Ferrara, 1998). Through PBA, language learners have more opportunities to produce and use target language (Goldschmidt et. al, 2007). Examples of PBA include oral presentations, storytelling, reader's theatre and English debate. Another key feature of PBA is the provision of quality feedback from various parties like teachers, peer and parents (Black et. al, 2003; Falchikov, 2005; Wiggins, 2004). Through the process of commenting on their peer's work, students are also showing their understanding on the target learning items. Evaluative criteria are explicitly made in advance so the instructions can align with the assessment. Tong (2011) regards it as coherent assessment approach which matches the ideologies behind teaching and learning language arts. Therefore, on one hand, PBA helps pre-service teachers regain their focus on communicative language teaching methods regardless of unfavourable school cultures during teaching practicum; on the other hand, PBA makes learning English more achievable and relatable to students so even less-abled ones can be motivated (Espinosa, 2015; Yildirim & Orsdemir, 2013).

## Assessment for Learning Culture in Hong Kong

Tong (2011) advocates that promotion of PBA requires extensive changes in school culture and the learning and teaching approaches. Radical departure from traditional modes of assessment will be the key factor affecting the popularisation of the use of PBA in the



classroom. PBA is a form of Assessment for learning (AfL). AfL is regarded as a formative assessment which can provide more accurate and instant feedback on learners' work and help improve teaching and learning (Board of Education, 1997). Common with most innovations, the degree of actual implementation of AfL varies. While some schools have developed a good understanding of AfL and are realizing its spirit, other schools are adopting the innovation in name, without there being any concrete classroom evidence of the principles of AfL. The challenges of implementation cited are due to the existing educational norms. Biggs (1996) and Carless (1999) suggest Confucian Heritage Cultures (CHC) exerts a strong influence on parents' and students' expectation that senior secondary years are preparing students for the university entrance examination. Thus, teaching and learning becomes exam-oriented with the main focus on the product - public examination results. Therefore, the more innovative assessment approach, AfL becomes secondary regardless of its benefits discovered by scholars such as DeLuca et. al (2018) and Espinosa (2015). As reflected by the Education Commission (2000), even the usual assessments in schools are depicted as rehearsals for public examinations rather than a fundamental learning process. Hence, if PBA can be successfully implemented in the classroom, it can vary the assessment methods and promote AfL culture in Hong Kong schools.

### **Significance of the study**

The significance of the study lies in the implications for teacher educators on how PBA can be better taught in teacher training programmes and hopefully, provide insights on how other teachers can better implement PBA in their LA classrooms. As an action research, this study also functions as a platform for the pre-service practitioner to voice out her struggles through the implementation process. The bottom-up approach, from practice to theory, offers her the

opportunity to create knowledge. It also enhances the pre-service teacher's pedagogical knowledge and serves as a professional development process for herself.

### **Research questions**

To understand the learning process of the pre-service teacher implementing PBA in her classroom, this study addresses two questions:

1. What are the challenges a pre-service teacher faces in the implementation of performance-based assessment in a band three secondary school classroom in Hong Kong?
2. How does the pre-service teacher modify her teaching to address those challenges?

### **Methods**

#### The Action Research Method

To have a better understanding of the pre-service teacher's own teaching and document her growth throughout the learning process, the action research method was used to collect data. Action research is a study conducted by practitioners themselves to solve practical problems in their own classroom (Burns, 2010; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982). It facilitates professional development as teachers can learn from their own experience (Stenhouse, 1975). The use of action research revolutionises teacher training as it reverses the top-down ideology. Current teacher training programmes fits the top-down approach of knowledge transmission where theories inform practice (Morris & Adamson, 2010). Researched-proven education theories are taught to student-teachers for applying in the classroom. On the other hand, in action research, the practitioner work in-hand with researchers or play a dual role as teacher-researchers. Classroom practices inform education theories making them more relatable and

applicable to real life. This is crucial to pre-service teachers' field experience as the more authentic the experience is, the earlier they realise the realities of language classrooms. Although action research has the above advantages, it has been criticized for not meeting the requirements of positivistic methodologies which means it is not scientific enough (Ross, 1984). Moreover, Ross (1984) doubts how generalisable the research results are to other classrooms. Other researchers like Hitchcock & Hughes (1995) are sceptical about the practitioners' competence as researchers. To address Hitchcock & Hughes (1995) and Ross (1984)'s doubts, a second rater will be involved in the investigation process to assist the pre-service teacher in her reflective process by giving feedback on her teaching.

### Setting and Participants

This study took place during the researcher's one-semester teaching practicum in a secondary school in Hong Kong. This school was a band three school, which refers to schools that admit students who are at the bottom 33% based on their academic results in primary five and six. Students (N=14) in the pre-service teacher's form three English class are academically-challenged students. Most of them are non-Chinese speaking students with diverse nationalities. They learn English as their second language. Since this is an action research, the pre-service teacher is also a participant of the study. The pre-service teacher is a local Chinese who is studying her fifth year in an undergraduate level teaching training programme at a university in Hong Kong. She has completed all the English language pedagogical courses in the university. She learnt Cantonese as her mother-tongue and English as her L2. She has local schooling experience throughout her primary and secondary years. Though she had not experienced PBA when she was studying in secondary school, she learnt about this assessment method in one of her university pedagogical course. This founded the base for the

current study. During her teaching practicum, she implemented PBA in her form three English language lesson which also adopted a cross-curricular approach with the Liberal Studies subject.

### Procedures and Utensils

The present study integrates Macintyre (2000)'s model on the steps of practitioners' action research and Kemmis and McTaggart (1982)'s action research cycle. At the planning stage, the situation in classroom was examined by doing literature review and the pre-service teacher's observation in the first few lessons. She then prepared the lesson plan and materials. In the action stage, she implements PBA in her lesson. The observation stage consisted of on-site observation and the pre-service teacher re-watching her lesson videos. Then, it is the reflection stage. The pre-service teacher received feedback from her teaching practicum supervisor and discussed the challenges and solutions of the implementation of PBA. It was followed by teaching improvements in the classroom and self-reflection after each lesson. Each lesson was a cycle of "planning", "action", "observation" and "reflection" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982). Altogether eight LA lessons were involved in the study. Though the sample is not representative of all English classrooms, it provided insights into the experiences of a pre-service teacher applying PBA in her LA classrooms, the challenges she encountered and the ways she overcame them.

The details of each lesson are shown below:

Lesson (Cycle)	Date	Content
1	9 <sup>th</sup> Sep	Article writing preparation- struggles of NCS students in HK

	10 <sup>th</sup> Sep	Article writing
	11 <sup>th</sup> Sep	Writing feedback
2	23 <sup>rd</sup> Sep	Poster presentation- Anne Frank exposition stage
3	2 <sup>nd</sup> Oct	Group discussion- Anne Frank 8 <sup>th</sup> person in the annex
4	23 <sup>rd</sup> Oct	Diary writing- First Day at school
5	6 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Roleplay- The Arrival Ch.1
6	4 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Group presentation prep- Challenges of Immigrants
	10 <sup>th</sup> Dec &12 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Group presentation
7	17 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Speech bubble roleplay- Scenes from The Arrival
8	18 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Letter writing- Introduce The Arrival to classmates

As the teacher implemented the action research cycle in her lessons, she also collected data from her own reflective journal, video recordings of the lessons and her field experience supervision feedback forms as well as her students' feedback through questionnaires. (A statement like this would help the readers know what sources of data have been collected during the AR. After this statement, each source of data and the details can be introduced).

The pre-service teacher wrote her reflective journal daily. It included her retelling incidents that happened in her teacher and her thoughts about lesson planning, lesson observation and other teaching related matters. The lesson video recordings helped the pre-service teacher recall moments of her lesson during the reflection stage so she could write her reflective journal. For this research, the journal entries of the eight lessons were extracted and colour coded for analysis. They were verified by video recordings of the lesson which were transcribed and coded for analysis too.

In addition to the established model of action research, students' feedback (N=14) of the teaching was collected through questionnaires for triangulation. Students are important stakeholders of the teaching and learning cycle, so their response and feedback is crucial for the improvement of the student-teacher's implementation of PBA (Czerniawski & Kidd, 2011). By taking into consideration students' views, learner agency is enhanced. This goes in hand with one of the rationales of implementing PBA, having students responsible for their own learning (Lodge, 2005, 135).

Content analysis (Merriam, 1998) was employed to analyse the reflective journal and lesson transcriptions, aiming to identify salient themes regarding the researcher's challenges faced and actions to cope with them. The data collection and analysis process was conducted concurrently so the investigator could have the chance to understand more about her own teaching during the analysis process and identify unanticipated problems that emerged. Process validity was ensured by the use of three methods, teacher's reflective journal, video recordings and questionnaires from students to verify each other through data triangulation (Anderson & Herr, 1999; James & Augustin, 2018). The teacher's reflective journal and students' questionnaires were used to answer research question one. For research question two, it was answered by the teacher's reflective journal.

To further ensure the reliability of the execution of action research, a second rater, a teacher of the teacher training programme facilitated the investigator in her reflective process. The pre-service teacher's field experience supervisor had post-lesson discussions and gave comments on her teaching. This can also address Elliott (1996), Hopkins (1993) and Macintyre (2000)'s ethical concerns in practitioner's conducting research due to their dual roles as teacher and researcher which may lead to prejudice on the study and exploitation of the pupils.

## Results

### 1. Challenges in the Implementation of PBA

#### 1.1 Time constraints

Limited preparation time and lesson time was one of the biggest challenges in the implementation of PBA. Concerning preparation time, the pre-service teacher had difficulty in adapting to the demanding school culture at the beginning of the field experience semester.

*She (the mentor) only told me via WhatsApp at 10:30pm I was going to teach tomorrow's English lesson.*

*I was only told a few periods before class we were going through the writing feedback today.*  
*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 1)*

She was only notified the night before to conduct her first lesson in the next morning. The lesson preparation for Lesson 1 was at haste. Lesson 1 was a writing preparation lesson with continuation in the next two days on completing the writing and giving feedback. The pre-service teacher only had two periods to mark all the students' writing and prepare for the feedback lesson. With so limited lesson preparation time, the pre-service teacher did not have enough time to think and plan each teaching step carefully on how to implement PBA. This challenge appeared less as the field experience went on since the pre-service teacher gradually adapted to the school and learnt to plan ahead.

As for the lesson time, the pre-service teacher found it insufficient throughout the semester. She hoped for more lesson time so she could implement PBA more in-depth. There were lessons where time was not sufficient to conduct peer evaluation and show samples of good

work. This strongly hindered the quality of implementation of PBA and students' learning and reflection process.

*We were in a rush to finish the poster presentations before the bell rang. I couldn't give many comments on their work.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 2)*

*Students spent too much time on the persuasive devices worksheet and thinking about their criteria for the 8<sup>th</sup> person so there wasn't enough time finally to ask each group to explain their decision.*

*I wish we had a double period for this task. Students could have more discussion time and I could give each group some feedback after their sharing.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 3)*

For some of the lessons, the pre-service teacher did not have time to give students feedback on their task since they were in a rush to end the class on time. The learning task was done in a hurry so it is doubted students could thoroughly absorb each step of the learning process. In fact, this challenge was also shown by the students' questionnaire responses.



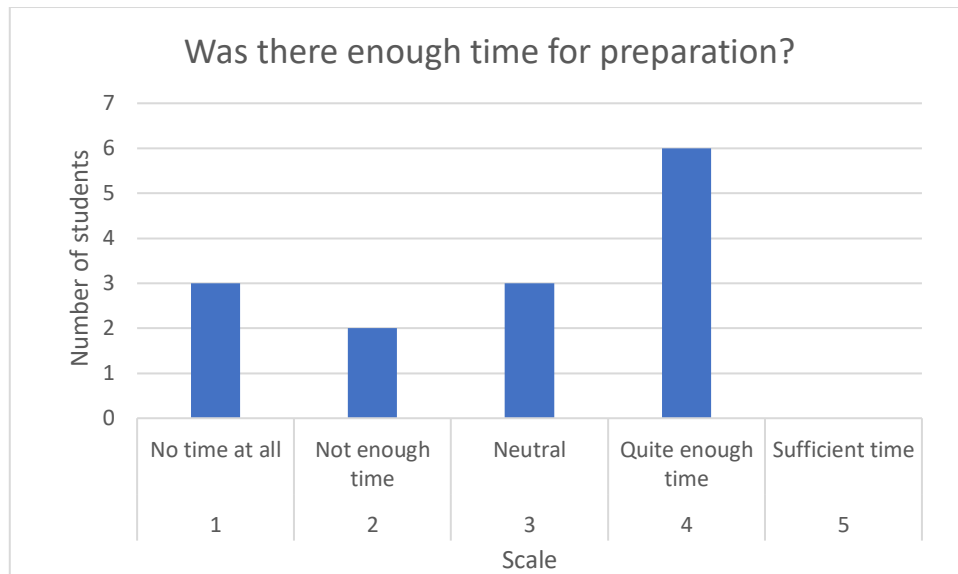


Figure 1. The students' views about the preparation time for doing a PBA task.

As revealed in Figure 1, more than a quarter of the class (35.7%) expressed that there was not enough time to prepare for the tasks. The mean (2.86) and standard deviation (9.51) were calculated. It showed that the responses were quite diverse as some students also expressed that there was quite enough preparation time for completing the tasks. Also, the students' short answers to the open-ended questions on the questionnaire showed “finding the answers on time” and “not enough preparation time” were the difficulty they faced in completing the PBA tasks.

### 1.2 Teacher's knowledge

Teacher's knowledge of PBA and teacher's knowledge of the students also posed challenges to the pre-service teacher's implementation of PBA.

First, since the pre-service teacher only had a one-hour lecture on PBA in her pedagogical course, her knowledge of PBA was limited. This posed challenges in the process of implementation as she had to learn by doing and slowly grasp the essence of the method.

*I was unsure what feedback to give after their poster presentation, so I only pointed out factual mistakes on their posters.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 2)*

*Theoretically, I knew I had to give feedback to students after they performed the task, but I didn't know how? What should I comment on? Their acting? Their language use? On the spot, I just didn't know what to say.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 5)*

How to provide feedback to students' work was a challenge to the pre-service teacher. In the questionnaires, two students reported that they did not receive any feedback from the teacher on one of the PBA tasks and another student craved for more feedback from the teacher. As the teacher reflected, theoretically knowing the importance and steps of giving feedback did not mean actually being able to do it in class. It was similar for the case of providing samples for students to model. The pre-service teacher knew it was one of the elements of PBA in theory, but she was not able to show students samples of good work for every task.

*Was it possible to perform a sample for the class? or should I have showed them a sample script?*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 5)*

The teacher also found that she had insufficient knowledge of her students, which was due to her role as a newbie in the school. As a pre-service teacher doing her teaching practicum, she was only at the school for one semester. Thus, she did not know what the students learnt in the previous years. This sometimes led to overestimation of students' abilities.

*I don't know students' English ability and previous knowledge. What are their expectations on English lessons?*

*I thought they knew how to write an article conclusion, so I didn't teach it in the first lesson.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 1)*

*I didn't know they didn't know how to use the mark up function on iPad to draw on photos.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 7)*

As the pre-service teacher did not know her students well, grouping became a challenge for her.

*It was the first time. I was worried how they would function in groups. What would their reaction be to groupwork?*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 2)*

*Some of them didn't like their groupings. They asked if they could change groupmates.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 4)*

For the students, grouping was one of the challenges as it impacted the quality of their work in many speaking tasks. In the questionnaire, one student identified “communication between groupmates” and another suggested “teamwork” as their challenges in completing the tasks.

To address this difficulty, the pre-service teacher appealed to her field experience supervisor for help. She gave suggestions on how to deal with such situations.

*You can arrange regular groupmates for pair and groupwork.*

*(Field Experience Teaching Supervision Form of Lesson 4)*

As suggested by the supervisor, the pre-service teacher took some time to experiment different groupings of students and observed the students' reactions and learning results. Through her ongoing experiments, she gradually got to know her students better.

While teacher's knowledge about PBA and the students have great impact on the implementation of PBA, the skills of the pre-service teacher also played a role.

### 1.3 Teacher's skills

The pre-service teacher's limited classroom management skills and pedagogical skills brought difficulties to the implementation of PBA. When students performed or showcased their work to the class, some were excited or impatient listening to others and could not focus on the task. This caused problems to the teachers' lesson flow.

*I had difficulty in catching students' attention back after the discussion. They kept chatting with their friends even when I said it was time to report back.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 4)*

*I should have asked students to return to their seats after the roleplay preparation so when others are performing, they could be more attentive.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 7)*

As the pre-service teacher did not foresee such classroom discipline problems, preventive measures were not taken and the quality of whole class discussion and peer evaluation work were hindered. The field experience supervisor gave suggestions to improve this situation.

*You can give students a time limit for task, like using online stopwatch.*

*(Field Experience Teaching Supervision Form of Lesson 4)*

After trying out the supervisor's suggestion, the pre-service teacher learnt that tools like online stopwatch can facilitate teacher's classroom management. By using a stopwatch to time students' work, the teacher can easily grasp their attention when time is up since it will ring loudly.

Regarding the pre-service teacher's pedagogical skills, she sometimes struggled in giving clear and thorough language of instruction.

*I forgot to tell them the presentation criteria and go over the checklist before letting them do the task.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 2)*

*I forgot to explain all the instructions before getting them into groups. Thus, I had to explain to them what to do next group by group.*

*Thinking back, the lesson wasn't very successful. I should have given more detail teaching steps on how to persuade people.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 3)*

While the pre-service teacher was not satisfied with her own instructional language, most students did not share the same view (see Figure 2).

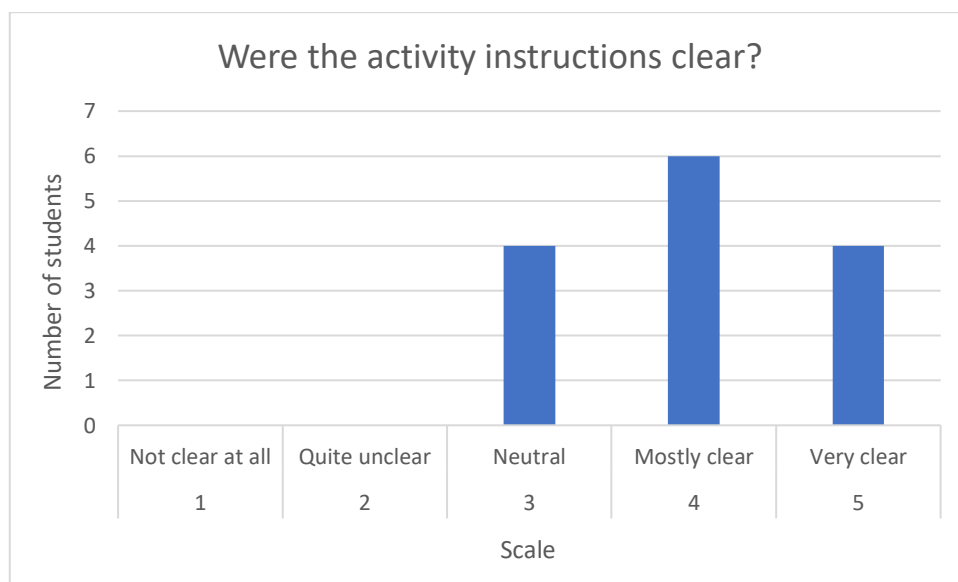


Figure 2. The students' views about the teacher's instructions in doing a PBA task.

Figure 2 revealed that more than half of the students (71.4%) rated the teacher's instructions clear. The mean (4) and standard deviation (11.1) was calculated. Students seemed to have rated it quite positively. However, when asked how the teacher could improve her instructions in the questionnaire, two respondents requested the teacher "give more time" as in speaking slower so they could digest the steps and another thought the teacher needed to "speak louder".

With unclear or incomplete instructions, students could not follow and produce high quality work. It also affected students' understanding of the subject knowledge.

#### 1.4 Lack of external assistance

When implementing PBA in the classroom, the pre-service teacher faced challenges in developing teaching materials and dealing with technical problems. These could have been solved if there were assistance from teammates. However, the pre-service teacher implemented PBA in her classroom alone.

*There were no ready-made teaching materials, so I had to make them myself.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 1)*

*I had to device my own sample writing since there wasn't one fit for this task.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 4)*

*I had difficulty in creating 5 different presentation topics with linkage to the Liberal Studies subject.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 6)*

*It took me the whole morning to write this sample letter.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 8)*

As reflected, she had to prepare all the teaching materials from the first till the last lesson, including designing the task, checklists, evaluation forms and sample texts. This was a heavy burden to one student-teacher. Due to time and ability constraints, it was sometimes

impossible for her to create all the materials for each task. In addition, she was required by the school to adopt the cross-curricular approach in her teaching. This made it more challenging in developing lesson materials as she did not have much knowledge of other subjects.

Concerning the technical problems, the pre-service teacher designed a group presentation task as one of the lessons incorporating PBA. Some technical issues surfaced and took up some lesson time. It also hampered the quality of the students' presentation.

*IT technical issues like projector malfunction occurred. Some students also forgot to save their updated ppt on their USB, so their presentation wasn't complete.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 6)*

Last but not least, we should not forget the most important stakeholder of teaching and learning, students. Their capability and motivation can affect the implementation of PBA.

### 1.5 Ability and motivation of students

Though the pre-service teacher tried to design the PBA tasks that matched the student's English proficiency level, occasionally a few students had difficulty in understanding the task or performing well. This affected the implementation of PBA since the quality of work depends on student's English ability.

*Some students found it quite difficult to summarize each diary entry in one sentence.*

*They were shy to speak up.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 2)*



Some of them didn't understand the task well and couldn't think of their criteria and explanation.

(Reflective Journal of Lesson 3)

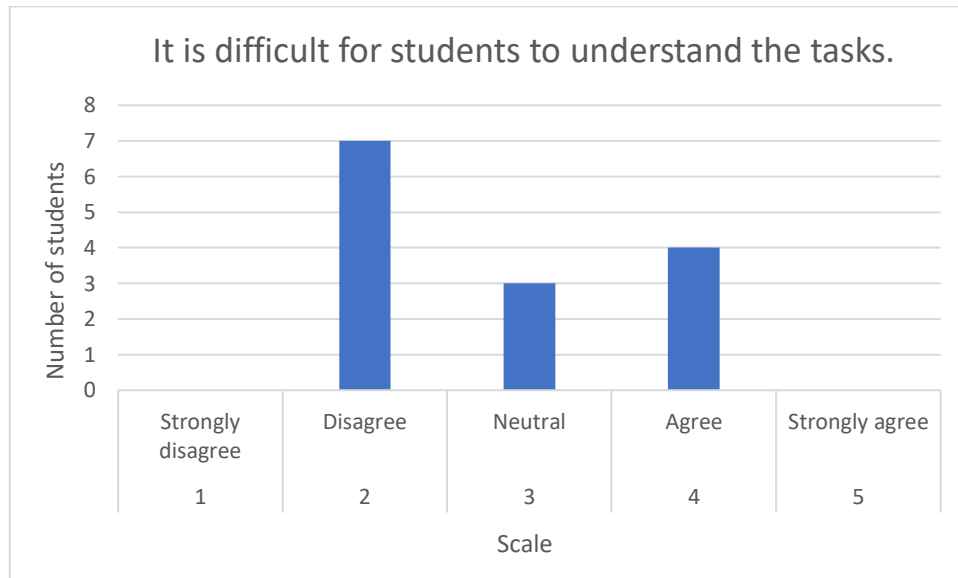


Figure 3. The students' views about the difficulty of a PBA task.

Figure 3 showed that half the class disagreed with the statement. The mean (2.79) and standard deviation (7.56) was calculated. It meant half the class found the tasks easy to understand. Though the statistics look positive, as teachers, we try to cater for learner diversity as well. The 28.6% of students who think the tasks were too challenging do fit the description that some of them struggled to understand the tasks.

Another challenge faced by the pre-service teacher was her students' low motivation. Since only one out of the eight lesson PBA tasks was counted towards the students' term grade, students might have been less serious about their work. It can be seen from their carelessness when submitting writing pieces.

*Students didn't proofread their work before submitting, leading to lots of obvious spelling mistakes.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 1)*

For some of these students, they were not motivated to do well even for the graded presentation. It may be due to the school background as a band three school. The students are less inclined to put effort in their studies. Thus, workload was unfairly shifted to a few of the more hardworking students. This affected the reliability of the assessment.

*Students didn't have good preparation for the presentation...free riders occurred.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 6)*

Also, some were not very motivated to pay attention to others' presentations and performances because they knew it was not a must to give comments and the peer evaluation form was not part of their grade.

*Students didn't pay attention to other groups' performance since they all did the same story.*

*They also knew the teacher would give comments anyway so theirs didn't matter.*

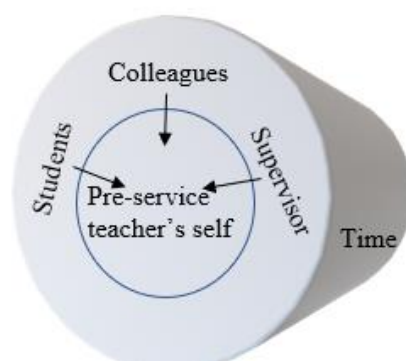
*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 5)*

Overall, the pre-service teacher faced the above challenges when implementing PBA during her field experience. After she engage in reflections of the effectiveness and challenges in implementing PBA in LA lessons, she adopted various methods to enhance the teaching quality and improve the implementation process.

## 2. Methods to Overcome the Challenges

Below is a framework developed by the pre-service teacher through her reflective process on how she overcame the challenges in implementing PBA (see Figure 4). Starting from the inner circle, the pre-service teacher herself read more journal articles about PBA to enhance her knowledge on the assessment method. She also formed a good habit of planning ahead of time since the second month of the field experience. Through the use of reflective journals and reviewing her own teaching videos, the pre-service teacher noticed her flaws and progressively developed better pedagogical skills.

Moving towards the outer circle, different parties provided feedback on the pre-service teacher's teaching. Through constant formative assessments in class and interactions with students, the pre-service teacher gained more understanding of them and their English proficiency level. While planning tasks that required cross-curriculum subject knowledge, the pre-service teacher would seek help and advice from her colleague in the field experience school. One of the colleagues who often co-taught with the pre-service teacher gave a lot of feedback on her teaching as well. The field experience supervisor was another source of support in overcoming the challenges. She came to observe and assess the pre-service teacher's lessons. During the post-lesson discussions, suggestions on classroom management and teaching instructions were given. Therefore, with time comes experience. The pre-service teacher gradually advanced her knowledge and skills.



## Figure 4. Framework for Overcoming Challenges in Implementing PBA

Practising the methods from the framework, the teacher made some modifications to her teaching.

### 3. Modifications Made in the Teaching

#### 3.1 Addition of teaching steps

This is the most frequent modification made in the pre-service teacher's teaching. When she got to know her students and their ability better, she made changes to her teaching content accordingly. For instance, in lesson one, the pre-service teacher suggested in her reflection, she should have used mind map to help the students brainstorm ideas for writing. In the same lesson, through observation, she also discovered that students did not know how to write an article conclusion. She made modifications to her teaching the next lesson by teaching students how to write a conclusion. In lesson four, when students prepared for another writing task, she included the use of mind map in the pre-writing stage.

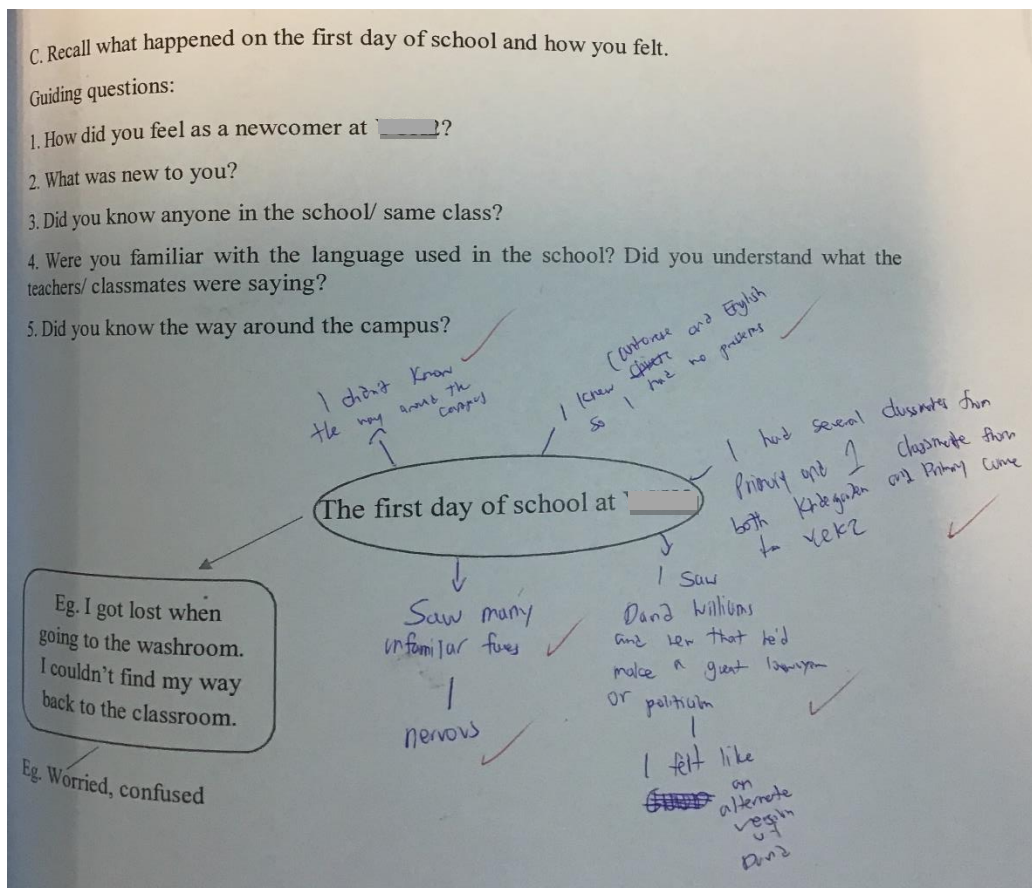


Figure 5. Sample of Student's Work Using Mind Map in a PBA Task.

### 3.2 Improvements in instructions and feedback

The language of instruction used by the pre-service teacher was improved by the rearrangement of teaching steps. For example, in lesson two, the pre-service teacher did not explain the content and use of the checklist before students started the task. This decreased the effectiveness of using checklists. Students were also unsure about the requirements of the task. When reviewing her teaching videos, the pre-service teacher realised the problem and made modifications to her future lessons. Thus, from lesson four onwards, the pre-service

teacher remembered to explain the content of the checklist before letting students complete the task.

*After making a mess last time, I remembered to tell the class about the checklist before letting them get into groups and start working.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 4)*

Another improvement concerns the quality of the feedback. In lesson two, the pre-service teacher still has not grasped how to provide useful feedback to students' poster presentation. With more knowledge of PBA and increasing teaching experience, she gradually enhanced the quality of feedback given to students. In lesson six and seven, she expressed less stress in providing spoken feedback to students' presentation and roleplay since she learnt to focus on the criteria on the checklist when giving comments.

*I am quite satisfied with my performance on giving feedback today. I have made more points with concrete examples. The checklist helped me too in giving feedback since I can elaborate based on the criteria on it.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 6)*

### 3.3 Variations in grouping and topics

To create a more harmonious learning environment, the pre-service teacher varied the grouping by experimenting the chemistry of grouping students differently. Before lesson five, the pre-service teacher did not take into account students' opinions when placing them in groups. With the advice from students, her supervisor and her colleague, from then onwards,

the pre-service teacher modified her teaching by allowing students to work with different partners.

Varying the topics of each group was done to increase students' motivation in listening and learning from each other. In lesson five, the pre-service teacher realised students did not pay attention while their classmates were performing their roleplay. Through reflection, she found that one of the reasons was that all five groups in class acted the same story. Therefore, she decided to vary the roleplay script and presentation topics in lesson six and seven. When each group did something different, students were more interested intrinsically to listen. This resulted in better participation in class and more peer feedback, less classroom discipline problems occurred too.

*Each group had a different presentation topic. They are “feeling of homesick”, “language barrier”, “unemployment”, “housing” and “cultural shock”. Students could learn about the multi-facet challenges of immigrants when listening to other’s present.*

*(Reflective Journal of Lesson 6)*

All the above modifications made improved the quality of teaching and made the implementation of PBA smoother.

## **Discussion**

The current study attempted to answer the research questions, “what are the challenges a pre-service teacher faces in the implementation of performance-based assessment in a band three secondary school classroom in Hong Kong?” and “How does the pre-service teacher modify her teaching to address those challenges?”. Qualitative data with supplement of quantitative data demonstrated that the pre-service teacher faced challenges such as time constraints,

limited knowledge and skills, lack of external assistance and low ability and motivation of students when implementing PBA in a band three secondary school classroom in Hong Kong. Through the learning process, the pre-service teacher modified her teaching by adding teaching steps, improving her instruction and feedback and varying the grouping and topics to address the above challenges. There are a few main concerns when implementing curriculum innovations such as PBA in the classroom. Three of them, teacher's limited knowledge, the backwash effect and classroom discipline, will be discussed below.

Teacher's limited knowledge of PBA was found to be a challenge in implementing curriculum innovation. This testified to Commeyras's (1992) and Kirmizi & Komec's (2016) claims. Both studies suggested more in-service teacher training was needed on how to implement PBA in the classroom. Without adequate knowledge on PBA and pedagogical skills on giving instructions and feedback, both in-service and pre-service teachers cannot implement curriculum innovations such as PBA independently. Teacher training programmes have a huge and undeniable role to play in educating pre-service teachers. For example, in the pre-service teacher's programme, as indicated by the findings, it is necessary to increase the teaching content on implementing curriculum innovations such as PBA. A one-off training, which was what pre-service teachers in the programme had experienced, may not be enough. In addition, pre-service teachers need to take control of their own learning. Self-agency of the teachers is a powerful device in fostering change (Gardner et al, 2011). Nonetheless, if they do not receive enough training, the feeling of helplessness may occur when they want to make changes and implement innovative approaches in their own class. Hence, more class time for student teachers and more professional development programmes for in-service teachers should be made available to transfer such knowledge about curriculum innovation to



teachers from a theoretical level to a more practical level so teachers feel capable and confident in making changes in their own class.

All assessment methods including PBA have a certain degree of backwash effect on teaching and learning. Opposite from Sumardi (2017), the current research found mostly negative washback effects of PBA to students' learning. Findings revealed that students did not cooperate well with groupmates and PBA tasks did not bond them better. Whereas it was found in previous research that groupwork in PBA tasks can result in positive washback effects such as cooperative attitudes and mutual respect (Bucholz & Sheffler, 2009; Gillies & Boyle, 2010), the findings of this study showed an opposite effect on students' learning. In this case, they have become a negative washback since some students did not work well with each other. It even hindered their academic attainment. During groupwork, some students did not complete their part of the task themselves but shifted the responsibility to their groupmates. This affects the reliability of the assessment negatively. Similar findings were reported by Kirmizi & Komec (2016). This mainly occurred due to the nature of PBA resembling real life tasks that are cooperative in nature (Soto et.al, 2017). Therefore, the group dynamic can highly affect the quality of the assessment. Furthermore, the findings of this study revealed that teachers' insufficient knowledge of their students can be a challenge to PBA implementation, which added a new dimension in the current literature on PBA. It can be an important factor since PBA requires students to work in groups especially for some speaking tasks more than other assessment methods.

Another washback effect worth mentioning is the idea "teaching to the test" (Izard, 2004). Behind this ideology is the spirit that students only put effort on items that will be assessed and given a grade. This negative washback has been mentioned by numerous scholars such as

Hawkey (2006) and Qi (2005). Though they both studied this effect of summative assessments, we should not overlook it when it comes to formative assessments. This study has shown that even when implementing PBA, students choose to work harder when the task (i.e. group presentation) contributes to their daily marks. For those that are only regular classwork tasks, students are generally more careless and less serious about their work. It seems that the habit of learning only for the grade “haunts” students regardless how the assessment method changes. This is an alarming signal for all teachers into how assessments can be implemented without such backwash effect.

Last but not least, classroom discipline is frequently teachers’ main concern when implementing curriculum innovations such as PBA. On a microlevel, this is mainly due to teachers’ previous schooling experience. Biggs (1996) and Carless (1999) suggest Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC) exerts a strong influence on teachers’ mindset and belief. Teachers were taught with the CHC ideologies as a student. Their belief that teacher is the authority in the classroom from their previous schooling experience easily leads to a teacher-fronted approach in teaching. They also have little tolerance to noise in the classroom, believing that attentive students are those who listen quietly. Thus, many teachers’ main concern when implementing curriculum innovations such as PBA is the classroom discipline. Most studies have not suggested this as one of the challenges because they were done in Western countries where PBA originated. On a macrolevel, most innovations in the Hong Kong education system are imported from the west or as Carless (2014) calls it, policy cloning. Therefore, Hong Kong teachers may see PBA faulty and not suitable for local schools since they think the increased student interaction in PBA causes too much noise and more classroom discipline problems. Likewise, another myth by school teachers is that curriculum innovations such as PBA can only be implemented successfully in band one classroom where

students have high English proficiency which is compatible to Western countries' school setting. Though students' low proficiency in English has also been revealed as a challenge in implementing PBA in Güven and Demirçelik (2013)'s study, Quadir (2014) confirmed that teachers are supposed to be able to design an appropriate level of assessment task in order to motivate the students to learn better. Through the current study, it is seen that even with some less abled learners, PBA can be implemented in the classroom when the teacher learns to adapt and design suitable tasks for the students. Thus, curriculum innovation is proved to be feasible even in lower banding schools.

### **Implications & Limitations**

Based on the findings from this study, some implications can be drawn for teacher educators, pre-service teachers, in-service teachers and schools who want to implement curriculum innovations such as PBA. Teacher training programmes should allocate more time in preparing pre-service teachers for implementing curriculum innovations. For example, in addition to reading theoretical articles, more microteaching or try-out lesson can be done in authentic classrooms before their teaching practice. Hence, pre-service teachers can experience implementing these innovations through hands-on exposure in a less stressful situation. With more positive teaching experience, pre-service teachers may be able to raise their self-agency and alter their negative presumptions towards implementing curriculum innovations in band three secondary schools. Hopefully, they can feel empowered to make changes in their new role.

On the other hand, schools should realise the importance of institutional support when implementing curriculum innovations like PBA. More tangible resources and human resources ought to be allocated to support teachers implementing new ideas in class. Schools

should also be more flexible in teaching schedule so teachers have the autonomy to try something new in their class.

School teachers should have awareness of the backwash effect of new assessment methods. Students are smart so we cannot just change part of the assessment method without allocating marks to them. Only when we take the new assessment method seriously, will our students learn to take it seriously as well. Teachers also need to make it explicit that grades will be given individually even if it is a groupwork. Thus, there is no way one can shed the work and responsibility to others. It is suggested future research study if PBA is counted as part of students' daily mark, how it will change students' perception of it.

A change in teachers' mindset is needed as well so they won't see noise as unproductive and not learning. Teachers being more open-minded can tolerate less conservative assessment tasks. Also, this study has shown that curriculum innovations such as PBA can be implemented in lower banding schools too. It is encouraging to see that though students' ability is one of the challenges, teachers can modify their teaching to make the implementation successful.

From the investigator's case, it is tempting to believe that PBA can be efficiently introduced in HK secondary school English classrooms. Unfortunately, the investigator cannot be considered an average pre-service teacher. It could be the case that other pre-service teachers may lack her ability to envision, plan, enact and assess a truly new approach to their teaching. The limitation of this study lies on how small-scale it is, involving only one pre-service teacher and 14 students implementing PBA for 8 lessons. The quantitative data collected is not significant enough. Future research should recruit more teachers like the whole form to

implement PBA for a whole school year. Thus, the form English teachers can work as a team to develop suitable materials and learn from each other. Some may question whether it is worth all the fuzz to implement PBA given that there are so many challenges. This is left for future studies to prove the effectiveness of this assessment method quantitatively.

## **Conclusion**

This study investigated the challenges a pre-service teacher faced in implementing PBA and how she modified her teachings to overcome them. Time constraints, limited knowledge and skills, lack of external assistance and low ability and motivation of students were found to be the challenges, so the pre-service teacher added teaching steps, improved her instruction and feedback and varied the grouping and topics to address them. Through reading this paper, teachers who aim to implement PBA in their LA classroom can foresee the difficulties they may face. It is hoped that teacher training programmes and schools can provide more support to teachers who are willing to implement curriculum innovations. Last but not least, emphasis has to be put on teachers themselves as an agent of change to take action and make their classroom a better place.

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## Appendix 1 Sample of Student Questionnaire

### Questionnaire on the Use of Performance-based Assessment in English lesson

Rate the items below from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

#### Section 1

	1	2	3	4	5
1. The tasks are designed related to real-life tasks.					
2. The tasks can showcase what knowledge and skills I have learnt in the English lesson.					
3. The use of checklist helps me be more reflective.					
4. The use of checklist helps me understand the assessment criteria.					
5. The use of checklist helps me keep track on my progress of the task.					
6. The use of checklist helps me evaluate others' performance.					
7. The tasks give me opportunity to receive feedback from my peers.					
8. The tasks give me opportunity to receive feedback from my teachers.					
9(a). The assessment criteria is explicitly made in advance.					

9(b). Is that helpful for your learning? Why?

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10. Do you think PBA is a useful strategy to be applied in all English classes? Yes/ No

11. How is PBA different from the other English lesson activities like doing grammar book and test drillings?

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12. It is difficult for students to understand the task.					
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13. What are the difficulties in completing the tasks?

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14. How do you think the teachers can assist you in completing the tasks?

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Section 2

Based on the PBA task of roleplaying scenes from The Arrival Ch. 2-4, answer the following questions.

	1 -No	2	3	4	5 -Yes
15. Were the activity instructions clear?					
16. Was there enough assistance from the teacher?					
17. Was there enough time for preparation?					
18. Was there enough time for performance?					
19. Was there enough time to evaluate each other's performance?					
20. Do you have enough knowledge on how to evaluate others' performance?					

21. What were your difficulties in doing this activity?

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22. How could the teacher have done better in designing the activity?

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23. How could the teacher have done better in giving instructions?

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24. How could the teacher have done better in giving feedback?

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Thank you for the feedback on my teaching 😊

## Appendix 2 Sample of Student's Use of Checklist

**Group Presentation Peer Evaluation Worksheet**

Feeling of Homesick group

Items	😊	😊😊	😊😊😊
1. They showed and described panels from the graphic novel illustrating the protagonist feeling homesick in the new land.		✓	
2. They elaborate in detail on newspaper articles/ government document about relevant figures of the immigrants in Hong Kong feeling homesick.		✓	
3. They compare the situation of the protagonist and that in Hong Kong.	✓		
4. They give suggestions for new immigrants who are feeling homesick.	✓		
5. They use a wide range of vocabulary and language patterns.			✓
6. They have eye-contact.			✓
7. They have a clear and loud voice.			✓
8. They speak fluently and naturally with little hesitation.			✓
9. They use appropriate body language.			✓
10. They have good time management.			✓

Language Barrier group

Items	😊	😊😊	😊😊😊
1. They showed and described panels from the graphic novel illustrating the protagonist facing language barrier in the new land.			✓
2. They elaborate in detail on newspaper articles/ government document about relevant figures of the immigrants' language barrier in Hong Kong.			✓
3. They compare the situation of the protagonist and that in Hong Kong.		✓	✓
4. They give suggestions for new immigrants who face language barrier in Hong Kong.			✓
5. They use a wide range of vocabulary and language patterns.			✓
6. They have eye-contact.			✓
7. They have a clear and loud voice.			✓
8. They speak fluently and naturally with little hesitation.		✓	
9. They use appropriate body language.			✓
10. They have good time management.		✓	✓



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