



Feedback Summary – Pre-conference Workshop:

Assessing Writing at B1 level: Training raters

Tutors:

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The following is the summary of the feedback provided by the participants of the “Assessing Writing at B1 level: Training raters” workshop run before the Fourth Annual EALTA Conference (15th-17th June, 2007). Besides its regular purpose, the summary is meant to serve as a source of information for the organisers of similar future events. The *Suggestions* section may indicate specific needs and provide ideas for workshops, and therefore we included the suggestions of the course participants along with the directly workshop related comments. The original wording of the comments was kept on the whole, but in some cases lengthy comments were shortened.

We would like to grab the opportunity to thank Edit Nagy (British Council Hungary) for funding the two tutors, Neus Figueras (Catalunia Department of Education, Barcelona, Spain) for her help concerning the organisation of the workshop, and for her small and devoted team from the Ministry, especially Fuensanta Puig, who assisted us with the preparation of the workshop materials and attended to our and to the course participants’ needs during the workshop. A considerable part of the praise the participants put on the feedback sheets belongs as much to all those who helped organise the workshop as to the course tutors.

1. Background to the course participants

The Assessing Writing workshop was attended by 23 participants who are permanent residents or work in altogether 14 countries (Austria, Check Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine). Altogether 17 participants provided feedback on the workshop.

2. “☺” comments

2.1. General comments

Very well prepared workshop.

The workshop provided a large amount of inspiration.

Very practical.

Very well done.

Provides good basis for rater-training sessions “back home”.

It was a constructive and useful pre-conference session. It helped clarifying many aspects of assessing writing at B1 level.

I think this workshop has been very interesting. We often train raters and I will surely “steal” some of your ideas. It’s been very useful.

I enjoyed all the parts of the workshop and I find all the aspects are extremely helpful both for rating tasks and for in-service teacher training.

Participation in the workshop will make future work easier.

2.2. Pre-workshop pack

Excellent pre-workshop task.

Excellent introductory materials.

Initial pack was ok.

Good intropack.

2.3. Content

Wide and relevant content covered

Rating practice excellent:

- steps ***
- procedures +++
- potential pitfalls
- reflection opportunities
- ideas for issues/processes in training

All around excellent job

- good supporting materials
- all questions well answered
- time and space given to develop particular ideas
- the last session on task development was an eye opener and very useful.

2.4. CEFR related content

Provided detailed information about the CEFR.

I have learnt a lot about the B1 level.

I especially found useful the way you showed that the CEFR has potential that may not be obvious at the first glance – but that certainly is there like you showed with the ‘Task Achievement’ criterion. TA is usually/often said not to be covered in CEFR – but it is, though not in a single scale but in several.

2.5. Organisation

Well staged sessions.

Coffee breaks give good opportunity to mix and discover/discuss experiences and prospects.

Very well planned workshop; a lot of variation.

The workshop organisation was ok.

Changing the members of the groups was a good idea.

2.6. Group discussions

Discussion about real life. Nothing is black and white in real life.

Good discussions.

Good mixture of group work and whole group discussion.

Thank you very much for your great effort and commitment. It was great to have a close look at your project and get insight into it in more detail. I appreciated your way of taking up questions from the group members sometimes ...

2.7. Atmosphere

Positive and friendly.

Wonderful atmosphere and way of conducting the workshop.

Patient and encouraging atmosphere.

2.8. Tutors

Extremely helpful extra comments and suggestions from tutors on concrete issues.

The facilitators (presenters) were highly professional, friendly and helpful.

2.9. Premises

It was too hot in the room. But I survived.

2.10. Concluding comments

Thank you for a nice and useful workshop.

Thank you for your hard work.

A very interesting workshop – thank you.

Thanks a lot for the nice & effective & productive time spent together.

Thank you for a very professional and high quality workshop.

The workshop has also been very useful for those of us who train raters – thank you.

The workshop has a good impact – Thank you!!

The workshop was very useful, thanks a lot.

Thanks very much for the workshop which I found very relevant to my working context and personal learning needs.

Thanks again for organising and structuring the workshop so efficiently and professionally.

The workshop – in addition to all the topic-related benefits – was also a good opportunity to meet and exchange details with people involved in writing in one way or another. I do look forward to keeping up with further work being done in the field of assessing writing and meeting you again most probably at EALTA conferences.

3. “☹️” comments

Before comments in this section some participants stated that these comments are “mini points” and “minor issues”, or noted that “It’s hard to find something negative, but if I were to say something, it is this ...” and “Nothing bad, just suggestion!”. Occasionally the “☹️”

symbol was changed to “☺” by some participants. There was one instance of: NADA: TODO MUY BIEN.

3.1. Content

The agenda was probably overloaded a bit; rating texts and discussing scales and other means supporting rating would have been stuff enough for 2 days. In addition, task construction is a completely different matter that cannot be done in about 4 hours.

Maybe too tense.

Instead of giving scores we could have decided whether a script is B1 or not. Then we would have got an even better understanding of B1-level.

3.2. The rating practice

The afternoon session was short for the content to be covered/tasks to be done. We had to haste through them.

Was too long.

More time could be given here.

I am afraid at some points you went a bit too fast for me: I just don't have enough “breathing space” to think things over (e.g. script scoring + justification). I am sure, though, it must be due to my nature: I always need time to think before I say or do things.

3.3. Homework

The fact that there was homework to be done.

3.4. Discussion

Maybe a few more minutes.

Sometimes it is good to stop repetitive asking.

3.5. Theory

A little more theory would have been good although I liked the fact that emphasis was put on the practical aspects.

3.6. CEFR related content

Would have been nice to have a little more discussion about CEFR related issues (age – cognitive skills, etc.)

Discussion on CEF could be shortened a bit.

I would have expected participants to be familiar with the CEFR. Therefore, we could have skipped the familiarisation phase on Tuesday afternoon. I would have appreciated to have these hours added to what we did on Wednesday - afternoon mainly – when I felt it would be good to have more time for discussion of rating.

3.7. The use of the analytic scale

Working with a global scale would have been interesting in addition to the analytic scale.

4. Suggestions

Some theoretical background for task development would have been useful.

More time should be spent on task development/item writing.

Perhaps a rater training guide is a good idea? Steps to follow, etc.

More sample materials made available.

I would have liked some sort of script/CD covering theoretical issues addressed during the workshop and not included in the pre-conference training pack.

It would be really nice if you could take things forward next time and facilitate/guide/lead the testers' debate on CEFR-related issues. Thanks again.

Articles to read in connection with the contents of the workshop.