A vibrant underwater scene featuring a large school of blue fish, possibly blue tangs, swimming in clear blue water. Below them, a dense forest of green kelp with long, flowing blades is visible. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a shallow depth.

Preparing young learners for exam success: Assessing speaking and writing

Elaine Boyd



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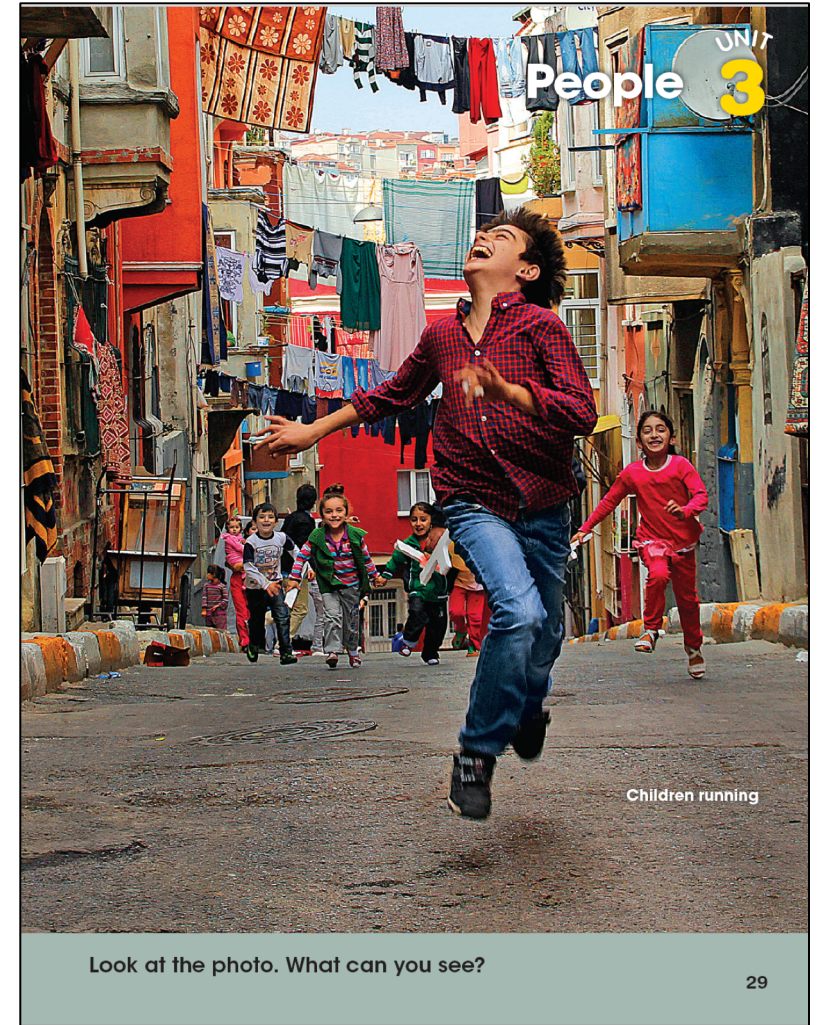
Today we will look at:

- What challenges do young learners confront in assessment of the productive skills?
- How can we support them in managing these challenges?
- What are the key features of speaking and writing performance?
What are we looking for evidence of? Why?
- How can we use assessment criteria to help young learners prepare?
- How can we manage feedback to help learners improve their performance?

Challenges with productive skills: performance

Chat box Question:
What do students get nervous about?

- Performance of 'self'
- Time: feeling put 'on the spot'
- Uncertainty about how they are being 'judged'



Look at the photo. What can you see?

Challenges with productive skills: content

What do students worry about?

- how to respond to a task appears too 'free' or open or vague
- understanding the input: listening/reading panic

What does the
examiner
want?



Can I say what I
would say in
my language?



What's the
right answer?



Managing challenges

- 1 Reassurance: giving information about expectations
- 2 Class preparation activities:
 - a. Prioritize communications over language
 - b. Make learners aware of L1 strategies
 - c. Collaboration
 - d. Reflect and chance to improve

a. Prioritizing communication over specific language: relating tasks to real life

Flyers Speaking

Part 3

Look at the information and answer the questions.

George's Weekend



What did George do on the weekend?
Where were the mountains?
Who did he go with?
What did he see?
Was it exciting or boring?

Look at the information and read the answers.

Ellen's Weekend



He went to the mountains.
They were in the north.
He went with his two best friends.
He saw a mountain lion.
It was exciting.

What
Where
Who
What
Was

Own it: Ask students in pairs to think of five questions they might ask someone about a single activity they did at the weekend. Encourage them to use the full variety of Wh- and Yes/No questions. Put students into new pairs to ask and answer the questions orally. Then put students back into original pairs to report back orally.

ive to exchange
ed on a set of facts and
student answers the
information they have
minor questions based
his part is testing the
short answers and to

part challenging
gs: understand the
they are given to read,
they can also find it hard
given plenty of practice in
ions as well as questions
happy or sad?

• Can ask basic questions about everyday topics

b. Make learners aware of L1 strategies: use what you know!

3 Work in pairs. Take turns to make a plan.

Plan 1

When: Saturday morning
Another day: Sunday afternoon
Activity: go to the movies
When and where: 3:30 outside the

Plan 2

When: Friday afternoon
Another day: Saturday afternoon
Activity: play badminton
When and where: 4:15 at the sports

Are you free on Saturday morning?

Student A

Saturday morning
Sunday afternoon
go to the movies
3:30 outside the

Student B

Friday afternoon
Saturday afternoon
play badminton
4:15 at the sports

So

Personalize: Ask students in pairs to write down the questions they would ask a friend if they were trying to make an arrangement for the weekend. Ask them to think of three questions they would need to ask to make the arrangement. Share ideas with the class.

Notes

Part 3 Students have to exchange information with the examiner based on a set of facts and are given. The student answers the questions based on the information they have and then asks the examiner questions based on the information they have. This part is testing the student's ability to ask questions with short answers and to elicit information.

Students can find this part challenging and need to do three things: understand the information they are given to read, ask questions appropriately. They can also find it hard to ask questions and need to be given plenty of practice with questions and yes/no questions, as well as open questions, such as *Is the boy happy*

Script

Questions about everyday topics


c. Collaboration: confidence, learning from peers, memory

Collaborate: Ask students in pairs to circle four differences. Then ask them to work together to describe those differences orally. Tell them to help each other to make full sentences. Monitor. Ask the pairs to share their ideas and sentences.


Game 2

1 Look at the pictures. Play in pairs. Find ten differences.

A



B



In picture A, it's raining.

In picture B, it's sunny.

GAME 2 85

d. Reflect and improve: repeat and succeed

Reflect: Ask students to check their work. Give them a checklist.

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Task Guidance Notes

Movers Reading & Writing Part 6 Students look at a scene picture and complete three tasks. They have to complete two sentences, respond to two questions, and write two sentences of their own about the scene. Students are assessed on:

- how accurately they describe the picture.
- how comprehensible their answer is.
- if their sentences are different from the sentences given.

Challenges Students can find this confusing because of the three different types of responses they have to write. They need practice in reading the tasks very carefully and understanding how to respond (e.g., with a word or phrase or sentence). They often struggle to write the last two sentences because they must not repeat anything from the previous questions. Give them time to identify the many things going on in the scene that they could write about.

Performance Descriptor

- Can write short simple phrases and sentences about pictures and familiar topics

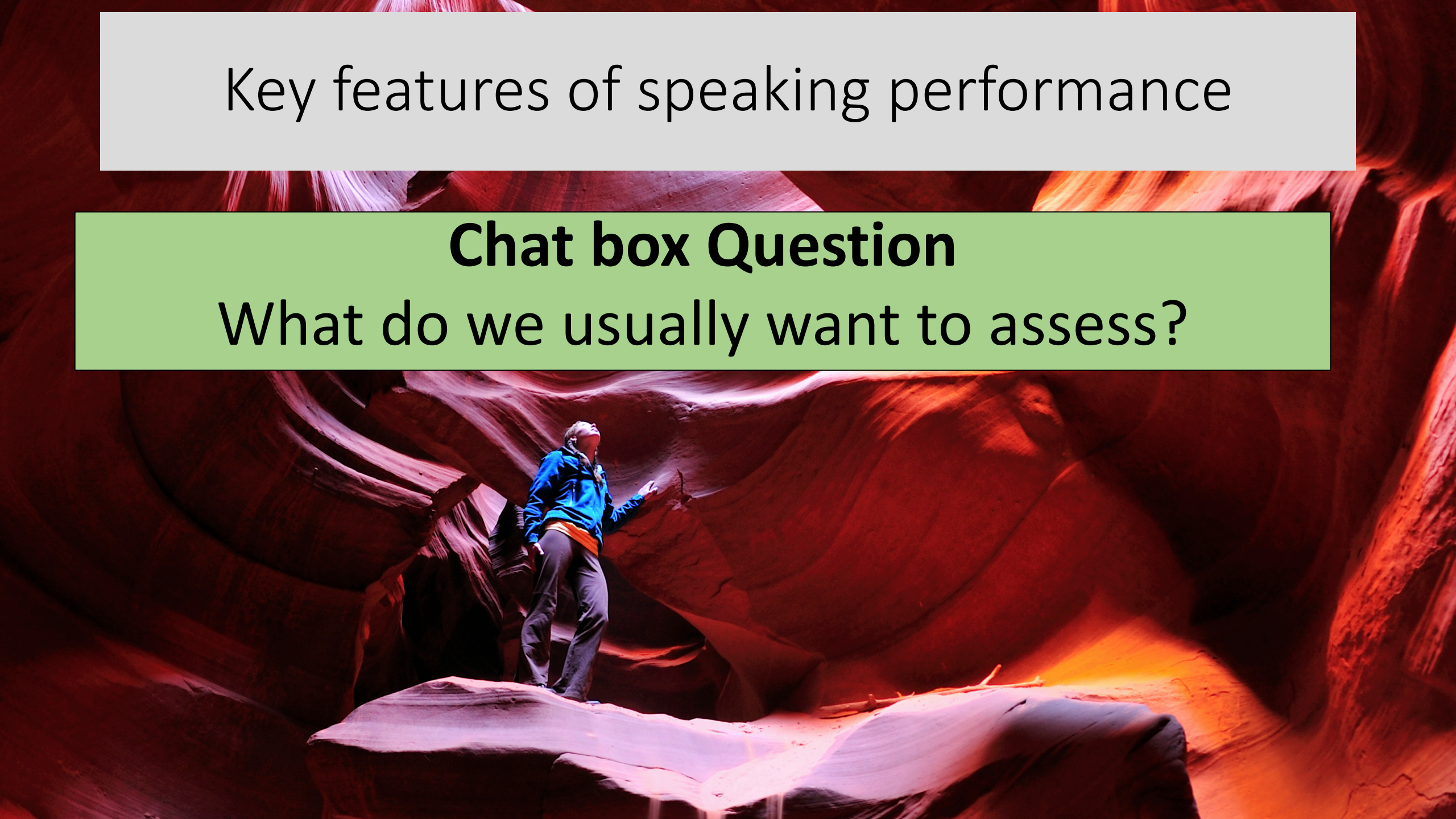
- **Reflect** Ask students to check their work. Give them a checklist.

	Yes or no?
Is my writing easy to read?	
Are my grammar and spelling correct?	
Did I write two new sentences?	

Key features of speaking performance

Chat box Question

What do we usually want to assess?



Key features of speaking performance

Usually **THREE** assessment criteria:

1) **Task fulfilment:**

Did the student **answer the questions/follow instructions?**

Use some relevant/irrelevant samples

2) **Coherence:**

Did what the student said **make sense?**

Focus on important words in a sentence e.g. pronouns

3) **Intelligibility:**

Was the student **understandable?**

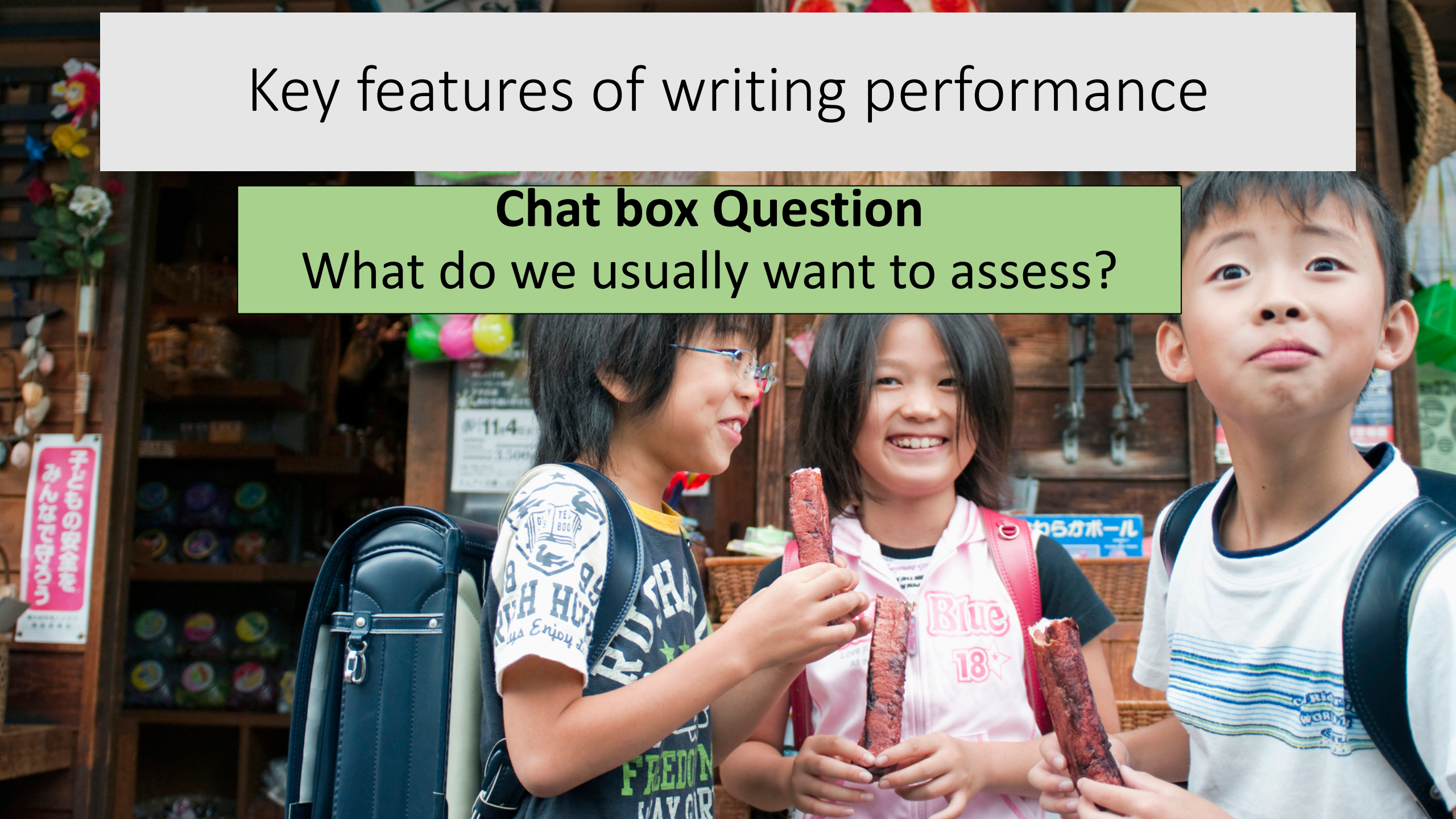
Focus on speed or stress (cf L1 vs L2)



Key features of writing performance

Chat box Question

What do we usually want to assess?



Key features of writing performance

Usually THREE assessment criteria:

1) Task fulfilment:

Did the student **follow instructions**?

Practice how much to write & topic focus

2) Coherence:


Did the student's writing **make sense**?

Show how to check work

3) Intelligibility:

Was the student's writing **clear and easy to read**?

Focus on orthography



Happy faces UNIT 7

Japanese children in the playground

Look at the photo. Answer the questions.

- What are the children doing?
- Who has got short hair?
- Who is wearing a jacket?

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Using assessment criteria to help speaking

- 1) Focus on one criterion at a time
- 2) Record two or three versions; ask students to judge
- 3) Class task to focus on each criterion, e.g. How many words can you get on task?
 - a. Who can make longest sentence?
 - b. What's wrong in sentences? (use incorrect stress to show different meaning)

Using assessment criteria to help writing

- 1) Focus on one criterion at a time
- 2) Look at samples you write; ask students to judge
- 3) Class task to focus on each criterion, e.g.
 - a. How many words can you get on task?
 - b. Who can make longest sentence?
 - c. What's wrong in sentences? Different spelling/punctuation = different meaning?

Approaches to feedback

Poll

Which of the following
do you do?



Approaches to feedback

- Agree points for feedback based on objectives to **de-personalize**
- Timing – **when** do you give feedback? Speaking vs Writing
- Focused – **single feature/point** because of cognitive load for learners
- Encourage **analysis/understanding** – why is something wrong or limited?
- Use **exemplars** – ask them to feedback on samples
- Give **single task** to improve; do again + more feedback
- **Vary** feedback: use whole class, group & individual

Giving feedback: speaking

- What do you expect?
- How can students improve?
- How will you check?
- How to be consistent and fair?

Student: (name)			
Student can	Progress 1 assessment	Feedback	Progress 2 assessment
Respond to simple questions	Date: 13 Sep A B C	<i>Listen more carefully to differences between questions</i>	Date: 9 Dec A B C

Giving feedback: writing

- What do you expect?
- How can students improve?
- How will you check?
- How to be consistent and fair?

Student: (name)			
Student can	Progress 1 assessment	Feedback	Progress 2 assessment
Write about their free time	Date: 13 Sep A B C	<i>Need to use more verbs which are different</i>	Date: 9 Dec A B C

Next Steps

- Make an agreement with learners about feedback
- Brainstorm assessment criteria with the class; give code words for each one
- Assessment bingo



Look

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Pre-A1 to B1



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