A well-designed performance assessment task incorporates a variety of skills and allows for different student responses.

- Nebraska K-12 Foreign Language Frameworks
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Editor
Paris Granville, Language Shaping Solutions
paris@languageshaping.com

Editor Emerita
Marcia Rosenbusch, Iowa State University
mrosenbu@iastate.edu

Publisher
National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL)

NNELL Executive Board
Janis Jensen, President (2004-06), New Jersey Department of Education
janis.jensen@doe.state.nj.us
Terry Caccavale, Vice-President (2004-06), Holliston Public Schools
accavalet@holliston.k12.ma.us
Mary Lynn Redmond, Executive Secretary, Wake Forest University, NC
redmond@wfu.edu
Robin Hawkins, Membership Secretary, Wake Forest University, NC
nnell@wfu.edu
Janet Glass, Secretary & Treasurer (2002-06), Dwight-Englewood School, NJ
iguana@jail.com
Lori Langer de Ramirez, Past-President (2004-06), Herricks Public Schools, NY
lj177@columbia.com
Jackie Gilbert, Vice-President-Elect, gj1221@verizon.net

Reviewers
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Grisel López-Diaz, New Jersey City University
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Duarte M. Silva, Stanford University, CA
G. Richard Tucker, Carnegie Mellon University, PA

Regional NNELL Representatives
Central East
Lynn Sessler Schmaling, Clovis Grove School, WI
lsessler@new.rr.com
Central West
Tammy Dann, Crestview Elementary, IA
dann@wdsms.org
Northeast
Virginia Staughton, Washington Primary School, CT
vstaughton@sheglobal.net
Pacific Northwest
Cassandra Celaya, Wyoming Department of Education
CelayaCas@aol.com
Southeast
Sylvia Amaya, Campbell Park Elementary School, St. Petersburg, FL
sylvia_amaya@places.psdb.org
Southwest
Fran Maples, Professional Development Center, TX
fmaples@garlandisd.net
Visit the NNELL Web site, www.nnell.org, for a complete and current listing of all state representatives

NNELL Appointments
National Networking Coordinator
Jean Modig, Thomas A. Edison School, NJ
borges20@optonline.net
Political Action & Advocacy
Ana Lomba, Suenos de Colores
ana@analomba.com
Website Editor
Sonmez Pamuk, Ph.D Student Iowa State University Curriculum and Instructional Technology
sonmez@iastate.edu

An organization for educators involved in teaching foreign languages to children.
Mission: Promote opportunities for all children to develop a high level of competence in at least one language in addition to their own. This is accomplished through activities that improve public awareness and support of early language learning.
Activities: Facilitate cooperation among organizations directly concerned with early language learning; facilitate communication among teachers, teacher educators, parents, program administrators, and policymakers; and disseminate information and guidelines to assist in developing programs of excellence.

Annual Meeting: Held at the fall conference of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.
Officers: Elected by members through a mail ballot election held annually in the spring.
NNELL is a member of the Joint National Committee for Languages-National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL-NCLIS).
For more information, visit the NNELL Web site at www.nnell.org or email NNELL at nnell@wfu.edu
# Language Assessment

## Learning Languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invited Article</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turning a New Light on Assessment with LinguaFolio</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacqueline Bott Van Houten</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White Paper</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position on Aptitudes Testing for Early Language Learners</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet Glass</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Test that Isn't Torture</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Eastburn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don Quixote and Fifth Graders</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet Glass</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 Assessment Tips</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugenia Porello</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invited Article</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating an Assessment Library</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NJ Consortium for Assessing Performance Standards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exit Point</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exit Point</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tammy Dann</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

## Updates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Updates</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President's Notes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janis Jensen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Updates</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NNELL Winter Workshops</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Updates</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NNELL Notes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Updates</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Resources</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Updates</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quick Takes</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Updates</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best Practices</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janis Jensen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Updates</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book Review: Content-based Second Language Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris Granville</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Updates</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006 NNELL Summer Institute for Regional and State Representatives</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Updates</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JNCL-NCLIS A Response to the National Security Language Initiative.</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. David Edwards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear NNELL Members:

With the arrival of fall, I have no doubt that you are all reenergized to provide the best teaching and learning experiences for your students enabling them to both discover languages and to discover their abilities as language learners. The theme of this issue, language assessment, is really about discovering the abilities of P-8 learners. As adults, we can vividly remember the kinds of tests we took in our language classes - they often focused on highlighting what we did not know on certain isolated and de-contextualized elements of language that resulted in misleading us about our overall progress as language learners. Alternatively, the articles in this issue advocate the use of assessments that document the successes/abilities of language learners and that facilitate student reflection of the learning process and improvement of learning. I am sure visitors to your classes see students involved in enjoyable, cognitively engaging, motivating and interactive learning activities. It follows then that performance assessments mirror classroom activities and are also enjoyable, cognitively engaging, motivating and interactive. Assessing student learning is no longer about counting up mistakes (testing), but about charting the progress and successes of learners (assessment). I am confident you will find the articles in this issue very informative and that you will be able to use many of these assessment approaches to discover the abilities of your students as they continue their journey of discovering languages.

The NNELL Board and I are pleased to inform you about additional services NNELL will be providing members in 2007. NNELL will:

- Offer expanded regional professional development opportunities in the central-east and pacific-northwest regions in addition to the northeast and southeast regions. Please see the opposite page for more information;
- Provide teachers with monthly advocacy materials in the new Home/School Connection feature on the web site which includes parent-friendly research, resources, and other ideas to support language learning in diverse classrooms and communities. The web site homepage will also offer a Newsworthy feature highlighting the most current information in language education of interest to P-8 teachers; and
- Anticipate and respond to emerging issues impacting P-8 education on behalf of its members. Please see NNELL’s 2006 Position Statement on Early Second Language Aptitude Testing (page 11).

Over the past several years, in particular, advocacy for K-8 programs of excellence in second language education has become increasingly important. As such, NNELL has created a new organizational membership to foster working relationships with other professional organizations centered on advocacy initiatives. NNELL’s new organizational members include: The American Association of Teachers of French (AATF), The American Association of Teachers of German (AATG), The National K-12 Foreign Language Resource Center (NFLRC); The National Capital Language Resource Center (NCLRC); The Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NECTFL), the Frankfurt International School, the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Rassias Foundation. Member organizations are invited to attend NNELL’s Annual Board Meeting that takes place each year during the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Annual Conference and are also entitled to send a representative to our annual National Networking Summer Institute. These events provide an excellent venue for the face-to-face sharing of ideas and development of joint professional initiatives.

It is with regret that I say my farewells as NNELL president. It has been a wonderful professional experience working with and for the NNELL Board, NNELL representatives and NNELL members. Thank you for allowing me to serve NNELL. If I may ever be of assistance to you in your work as P-8 educators, please feel free to contact me.

Best wishes,

Janis Jensen, NNELL President
New Jersey Department of Education
We are pleased to offer the following regional professional development workshops co-sponsored by the National K-12 Foreign Language Resource Center at Iowa State University. We hope to expand regional workshops in 2008 to offer increased professional learning experiences to early language educators. If you are interested in hosting a NNELL Professional Development Workshop in your area, please contact Terry Caccavale, NNELL Vice-President, at caccavalet@holliston.k12.ma.us

Northeast, February 3, 2007
Foreign Language Assessment K-8: The Glastonbury, CT Model & Teaching Reading in the Foreign Language Classroom, K-8

Rita Oleksak, Glastonbury, CT Public Schools & Terry Caccavale, Holliston, MA Public Schools

West Woods Elementary School, Farmington, CT
Site Coordinator: Christi Moraga, NNELL Representative, CT
trigal@comcast.net or 860-284-1230

Pacific Northwest, January 27, 2007
Strategies for Success with Early Language Learners

Paris Granville, Editor, Learning Languages

Pacific Lutheran University (PLU), Tacoma, WA
Dr. Bridget Yaden, Assistant Professor, PLU
yadenlbe@plu.edu or 253-535-8330

Southeast, February 10, 2007
Standards-Based Foreign Language Programs, K-8: From Theory To Practice

Terry Caccavale, Holliston, MA Public Schools

Autrey Middle School, Apsahetta, GA
Site Coordinator: Susan Crook, GA Dep’t. of Education
SCrooks@doe.k12.ga.us or 404-463-0601

Southwest, January 27, 2007
Standards-Based Foreign Language Programs, K-8: From Theory To Practice

Terry Caccavale, Holliston, MA Public Schools

Carmel-Clay Educational Services Building, Indianapolis, IN
Site Coordinator: Pamela Valdes, NNELL member
valdesp@ips.k12.in.us

Registration
$45 for NNELL members. Nonmembers who join NNELL when they register for the workshop will receive a 50% discount on membership: the total cost for workshop registration and new membership is $60.

To register, print out the workshop application from the NNELL website: www.NNELL.org and mail the completed application with a check or purchase order payable to NNELL to:

Dr. Mary Lynn Redmond, NNELL Executive Secretary
P.O. Box 7266, B201 Tribble Hall,
Waste Forest University
Winston-Salem, NC 27109

General Information
All workshops are five hours in length and include continental breakfast, lunch and workshop materials. Professional Development Certificates will be provided by NNELL. Sessions begin at 9:00 a.m. and conclude at 3:00 p.m.

No refunds will be offered. Workshops that are cancelled due to weather will be rescheduled.

Registration Deadline
January 12, 2007

Photo ©2005 JupiterImages.com
Welcome New Board Members

Dr. Marjorie Hall Haley is Appointed NNELL Executive Secretary

Dr. Marjorie Hall Haley, Associate Professor of Education in the Graduate School of Education at George Mason University in Fairfax, VA, has been appointed by NNELL President, Janis Jensen, as NNELL Executive Secretary for a renewable three-year term. She succeeds Dr. Mary Lynn Redmond who has served in this position since 2003.

Dr. Haley is a former Spanish, French, German, and ESL teacher of 14 years and holds a Ph.D. in Foreign Language Education and English as a Second Language from the University of Maryland, College Park. She has also earned a Master’s degree in education and advanced studies certificates from Towson University and Johns Hopkins University.

She has been on the staff of George Mason University for 19 years where she is a tenured faculty member and teaches Foreign Language and ESL methods courses as well as doctoral courses in Brain-compatible Teaching and Learning, Bilingualism and Second Language Acquisition Research. She is actively involved in ongoing action research projects with teachers at local, national and international levels. She has conducted four international teacher action research studies focused on the impact of implementing the multiple intelligences theory in foreign/second language classes. These studies included over 3,000 students in fourteen states and six countries. In 2002, she was received the Outstanding Faculty Award in Teaching by George Mason University.

Dr. Haley’s research and publication record is wide. It includes her newest book, Content-Based Second Language Teaching and Learning: An Interactive Approach (2004), book chapters, articles, and scholarly essays. Her current book project is, Brain-compatible Teaching and Learning Activities for English Language Learners (2008). In addition, she is a featured scholar in the WGBH and Annenberg/CPB video, “Valuing Diverse Learners” available at www.learner.org.

NNELL is once again very fortunate to have a dedicated foreign language professional of high caliber serving as its executive secretary. We look forward to working with Dr. Haley in carrying out the mission of our organization. She may be reached at: mhaley@gmu.edu.

Ana Lomba is Appointed Advocacy Chair

NNELL president, Janis Jensen appointed Ana Lomba as the new advocacy chair. She has promoted early language learning and bilingualism across the nation. She will expand these efforts with NNELL. She will design and coordinate action-driven campaigns. Ana will collaborate with the NNELL president to provide up to date information for the Home/School Connection and Newsworthy sections of NNELL.org.

After graduating with a law degree from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Ana Lomba came to the USA to pursue graduate studies in Spanish and Latin American literature at Binghamton and Princeton Universities. She is Co-Chair of ACTFL’s Language Learning for Children Special Interest Group; Executive Board Member for Public Relations of FLENJ (New Jersey’s language association); and NNELL’s Representative for the state of New Jersey. In 1999 she founded a company offering language instruction and materials for young children. Ana is the author of several books and CDs in Spanish and French for young children including Play and Learn Spanish and French that received an award from the Parents Choice Foundation in spring 2005. She is also author of a Spanish for Preschoolers electronic guide. You can reach Ana at ana@suenosdecolores.com.

In Recognition of the Contributions of Dr. Mary Lynn Redmond

NNELL is deeply appreciative of the generous years of service Dr. Mary Lynn Redmond has graciously given to the organization. When foreign language educators think of NNELL, the name Mary Lynn Redmond is always positively associated with that image due to her active involvement with the organization since its founding in 1987. Dr. Redmond is a former NNELL President, Board Member, and most recently, served as Executive Secretary. She has been an ongoing source of guidance, support and inspiration to the organization throughout the years and has contributed significantly to NNELL’s status as a valued professional resource for early language learning. Merci, mille fois!
Award Announcement

Rebecca Richey Receives 2006 NNELL Award for Outstanding Support of Early Language Learning

Rebecca Richey, Program Manager of the Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) at the U.S. Department of Education, received the 2006 Award for Outstanding Support of Early Language Learning sponsored by the National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL). The award was presented in November at the NNELL Breakfast Swapshop event which was held in Nashville, Tennessee at the Annual Conference of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

Ms. Richey was chosen for the national award because of her strong commitment to early language learning as shown by her exemplary leadership, initiative and oversight of the Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) and Elementary School Foreign Language Incentive Program (FLIP) that focus on the establishment, improvement, or expansion of innovative foreign language programs. The Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) is one of the largest federal sources of funding for foreign language programs in U.S. schools. In addition, since assuming her role as program manager in 2001, Rebecca Richey has provided outreach to national, regional and state foreign language organizations and has served as a consistent and reliable resource at the U.S. Department of Education for foreign language educators at all levels. Due to her expertise in the area of foreign language learning, Ms. Richey also assists the Department in making important policy decisions that impact the field. She is undoubtedly one of our strongest advocates in Washington.

Ms. Richey has been an Education Program Specialist in the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) at the U.S. Department of Education for fifteen years. During this time she served on the Subcommittee on Expanding Employment Opportunities for Youth with Disabilities of the Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities, the New American High Schools Steering Committee, the America Reads Challenge, and the National Service Program (Américorps). She has been recognized by OELA for her contribution to the mission of the office for planning and coordinating the first U.S./Mexico Curriculum Symposium. The symposium attracted more than 150 attendees and resulted in bringing key educational leaders together to explore the connection between U.S. and Mexican education efforts.

Prior to joining the U.S. Department of Education, Rebecca taught Spanish and was the Fine Arts Department Chair at Liberty High School, Raleigh County, West Virginia. She received her undergraduate degree at the University of Northern Iowa and has completed graduate level work in bilingual education at George Mason University. She is a returned Peace Corps Volunteer and served in the Gaminés (street children) Program at La Ciudad don Bosco, Medellin, Colombia.

NNELL is honored to be able to recognize Rebecca Richey for her continued support and efforts on behalf of foreign languages, and in particular, for her advocacy of early language learning programs.
Ten independent Oral Language Builder kits build social and content-related language through topics students can truly relate to.

10 kits

Each of the 10 kits contains the following:
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- Story Stick-On™ writing pads (pack of two)
- Teacher's Guide
- Picture Cards
- Audio CD
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For more information, please visit our website at www.WrightGroup.com.
For product information, call 1-888-205-0444.
Turning a New Light on Assessment with LinguaFolio

Jacqueline Bott Van Houten

Introduction

This article aims to reshape the prevailing negative perception of assessment into one of a positive and powerful tool to guide learning, teaching and advocacy. Emphasis is placed on the importance of becoming assessment-literate, developing a balanced assessment system, using assessment results to motivate learners and mold instruction, and sharing data to inform stakeholders and advocate for language learning. Key to this new perspective is the recognition that daily classroom activities can be formative assessments in and of themselves. They have the potential, through systematic feedback and the use of reflective learning tools, like LinguaFolio, for guiding students to monitor and map their own learning.

Changed Perceptions of Assessment

Teachers, parents, and students frequently bristle when they hear the word assessment. So negative are some of the reactions to state and federally mandated testing that we have all but forgotten the positive impact assessment can have on teaching, learning and promoting language programs. Current research suggests that when they view assessment as a learning tool, teachers are more likely to integrate authentic assessments into their lessons and alter how they organize learning experiences (Williams, 2006). The negative attitude toward testing may be a result of testing used by government as an instrument for accountability and not as a learning tool. Fifteen years ago, states such as Kentucky and Vermont were on a different course with statewide assessments taking the form of portfolios in writing and mathematics and performance events in science, math, social studies and the arts. Early results showed teachers spent more time training students to think critically and solve complex problems than previously (What the research, 1996).

Today many of those alternative open-ended, large-scale assessments have been abandoned and testing has become standardized. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act has driven teachers toward designing instruction to help students "pass the test", rather than engineering creative and critical thinking learning environments. Many world language teachers have felt a trickle down effect from NCLB: some are asked to contribute to students’ test readiness by incorporating general statewide testing practices in their own assessments, others feel the need to fight to maintain their programs when funding is diverted to tested content areas. Without significant assessment data to make a strong case, many more programs could be in jeopardy when resources tighten (Keatley, 2006).

Throughout this period of test-driven teaching, leaders in the world language profession have responded to the need to demonstrate student progress and proficiency by choosing to view assessment as a learning tool. This stance focuses attention on integrated performance tasks, oral interviews, portfolios, collaborative projects and other alternative assessments. Assessments such as these can be particularly beneficial for young learners (McKay, 2006; Shohamy, 1998). Integrated assessments, which are activities that blend content and language in real world tasks, make learning meaningful to students and provide comfortable, and at times, playful opportunities for contextual language output. They bring a more balanced approach to assessment and have a positive effect on achievement, because students perceive them as activities rather than tests, and consequently, they perform in a more relaxed, stress-free manner, self-correcting. Implementing such assessment experiences often has the effect of increasing teachers’ use of the target language in class and improving student motivation. Instruction becomes more student-centered and sparks student-initiated activities.

Current trends in education emphasize the importance of this type of formative assessment that offers a snapshot of what students know in order to make responsive changes in teaching and learning (Wiggins, 2004: Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2006). Formative assessment provides a
balance to assessment systems and turns attention to a type of teaching that looks more like managing learning than teaching. Reframing how we think about assessment can positively affect how teachers shape curriculum, plan lessons and guide students’ learning. Dylan Williams (2006) purports that improvement in student achievement will be result from what happens in these newly constructed learning environments.

To gain greater ground we need compelling data. Dr. Carolyn Taylor’s study shows that foreign language students significantly outperformed their non-foreign language counterparts on every subtest of the Louisiana state assessment and the language portion of the fifth-grade Iowa Basic Skills Test (2003). Preliminary data from Dr. Adeleine Moeller’s longitudinal study of the effects of LinguaFolio on student achievement suggest a positive effect on achievement from self-assessment and goal setting (personal conversation, September 26, 2006). A balanced assessment system is vital for generating the necessary scientific data to maintain current programs, make systemic program improvements and advocate for new world language programs.

Therefore assessment can be an essential tool to: diagnose key areas for improvement, describe achievement and progress, manage and assist learning, improve curriculum and instruction, validate program design, facilitate articulation, and advocate for language learning.

Assessment Literacy

Acknowledging the need to reframe our perceptions of assessment signifies half of the challenge; applying this new perspective to practice is the other crucial aspect. To build a successful balanced assessment program, teachers need to be assessment literate, that is to know what assessment tools are available and to understand which particular types of instruments should be used for what purposes. A variety of assessments is fundamental to providing a comprehensive overview of a student competence and making learning transparent to students, parents and other stakeholders. Different assessments address different needs and purposes. Many of the simple, daily, classroom activities can serve as assessments to inform planning and motivate learners. After assessment instruments are selected and implemented, the next step is to analyze the results and interpret the findings to inform instructional decision-making. Adopting this new assessment perspective does not imply more time for teachers, rather a redirection of teacher energy to adapt instruction based on the results of assessment.

Leaders in the field (O’Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996; Donato, 1998; Tollefsen, 2005; McKay, 2006) agree that teachers need to use a suite of assessments in order to provide a comprehensive view of students’ knowledge and performance. Generally, assessments can be categorized in the following manner:

**Diagnostic** assessments identify problem areas, such as reading, language and cognitive skills. Information gained from diagnostic tests provides guidance for student placement or strategic intervention.

**Achievement** tests examine students’ mastery over what was taught. Not limited to paper-pencil tests, this type of assessment often focuses on discrete points, covers specific content and allows for a perfect score. Norm referenced, achievement tests compare students’ performance. In the past, achievement tests were principal determining factors in the assignment of grades. Achievement tests may be considered formative if conducted on an ongoing basis and used to inform teaching and learning.

**Proficiency** tests identify, globally, what students know and can do with the language. The content on a proficiency test is not limited to what was taught in the classroom. Criterion-referenced, proficiency tests compare students’ overall language competence to a standard, such as the ACTFL K-12 Performance Guidelines or state or district standards.

**Proachievement** assessments, a performance-based hybrid of proficiency and achievement tests, measure students’ progress toward identified proficiency goals. More than the ordinary tool, they provide a meaningful context and real-life simulation.

**Summative** assessment is a comprehensive check of what students have learned at the end of a lesson, unit, or course. Based on a cumulative learning experience, summative assessment is testing for achievement and, depending on age and level, can take the form of performance tasks, oral interviews, written reports, projects or role-plays.

**Formative** assessment encompasses of many of the ordinary learning tasks students do on a routine basis. Formative assessment provides on-going, continuous snapshots of knowledge used to monitor progress, give student feedback, modify curriculum and adjust learning experiences. Examples of formative assessment include anecdotal records, observations, interviews, performance tasks, written work, worded graphics, and journals.

**Peer-Assessment** encourages students to think deeply about the various elements of language competency when they rate other students’ performances and products against specific criteria. With well-designed rubrics, students can analyze and discuss language use and provide feedback to one another. Peer-Assessment helps student understand as-
Self-Assessment criteria, increase their evaluation skills, and develop autonomy.

Self-Assessment provides structure for students to reflect on their own performance, competencies and learning. Well-designed rubrics, checklists, guided discussions and examples of self-assessments enhance students' awareness of criteria for evaluation and quality of work. Students learn how to talk about language, set goals and take responsibility for their own learning. A new tool designed for developing learning awareness and self-assessment skills in early language learners is LinguaFolio Junior.

Self-Assessment through LinguaFolio

Research has shown that self-assessment increases student motivation, builds learning awareness in students, sustains their engagement in deep learning, and demystifies language learning (McKay, 2006; Little, 2002). LinguaFolio Junior is a self-assessment tool that starts early language learners on the course of reflective learning. Older FLES students or young students at a high language proficiency level through immersion instruction, may benefit from the secondary school version of LinguaFolio.

A project sponsored by the National Council of State Supervisors (NCSSFL), LinguaFolio is an instrument that allows learners to record and reflect on their language and cultural competencies. Based on the European Language Portfolio, LinguaFolio provides an excellent vehicle for developing self-assessment and reflective learning skills and strategies. It has been proven effective for use with English and foreign language learners in FLES and immersion programs (Little & Perclovà, 2001; Little & Ushioda, 2002).

LinguaFolio is composed of three parts: the language biography, the dossier and the passport.

The Language Biography is a record of the child's language learning history and cultural interaction, a personal examination of learning strategies, and a reflection on learning goals. It includes two approaches to self-assessment, one with Can-Do statements that very young learners can circle (e.g., I can sing a song, I can understand if you tell me how old you are, I can write labels on things), the other with Can-Do statements that can be checked off and dated (e.g., I can talk about things I like and dislike, I can understand everyday public signs). The Can-Do self-assessment demystifies language learning by clearly defining what students can do in simple terms and allowing learners to pinpoint their competencies on the language-learning continuum.

Besides assessing their language competence, learners also assess and reflect upon their interculturality. This is a term used by the Council of Europe to describe meaningful interaction with individuals from target language countries. It implies an understanding of culture, one's own and the foreign culture, and a use of the proper cultural behaviors with or without language. Early language learners build their interculturality skills first through awareness, by beginning to recognize cultural products, practices and perspectives in their own homes and communities.

To develop self-assessment skills students require guidance through an intentional step-by-step process. Self-assessment has to be learned through on-going direct instruction. Self-assessment does not have to be a lengthy process, but the more frequently students self-assess the better they become.

Reflective learning is a vital component of the Language Biography. Students begin to think about their learning strategies and process by answering questions like:

“What helps me understand when I read words in another language?” or “What activities help me pronounce words like my teacher says them?” Teachers are able to incorporate what they learn into planning differentiated instructional methods that address the needs of all their students. Subsequent questions in the Language Biography deal with goal setting that encourages autonomy in learners by forcing them to think about what they will have to do to meet their goals. Using the target language for reflective questions builds capacity for self-directed, negotiated language learning (Kohonen & Westhoff, 2001; Little & Perclovà, 2001). Like self-assessment, reflective learning is not intuitive and must be taught daily.

The Language Dossier is a collection of pieces of work and award or participation certificates chosen by the child to document and illustrate language skills, experiences, and achievements that demonstrate their language abilities to others. LinguaFolio belongs to the learner, so children make their own choices as to which works comprise the dossier. This establishes a feeling of ownership and strengthens their sense of responsibility for their own learning. Possible items in the dossier include: drawings, songs, rhymes, dialogues, illustrated stories, self-made picture books, e-mail messages, postcards and letters from pals or partner schools, a handmade dictionary, or video and audio recordings.

The Language Passport is an official document that records a summary of experiences and achievements, and reports competency levels based on a scale reflective of the ACTFL K-12 Performance Guidelines, the SOPA rating scale, and the Common European Framework of Reference (ACTFL, 1998; Council of Europe, 2001). Information in the Passport can be updated frequently by the learner. The Passport can be shown when students transfer from school to school, level to level or teacher to teacher. In this way it facilitates articulation and makes language learning transparent to a wider audience of stakeholders.
How to Use LinguaFolio

The web site of the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages - www.ncssfl.org provides links to two LinguaFolio pilot projects from which all pages of the Biography, Passport and Dossier can be downloaded for student use. Teachers may choose to participate in the research study of the five-state (Virginia, Kentucky, South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia) pilot or the Nebraska pilot, or use the documents on their own. Additional links are included for information about the European Language Portfolio (ELP) and LinguaFolio-related professional development activities. A downloadable PowerPoint presentation is also available on the web site.

European research has shown that both teachers and learners need time and training to experience success with portfolio self-assessment (Little, 2001). Taking a cue from the LinguaFolio’s “Can-Do” statements and reflective learning surveys, teachers can begin by integrating into their lessons short activities that heighten students’ awareness of their competencies and learning. In the following example students use a checklist to identify what they are capable of doing with language after a lesson on numbers.

What can I do with numbers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Easily</th>
<th>With Help</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can count to 100.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can understand when someone tells me their phone number.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can use numbers to tell someone how much something costs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can call the numbers in a Bingo game.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers can help students develop insight into their individual learning styles and strategies by asking probing questions, such as:

1. Which activities did you like the most in this lesson? Why?
2. What did you do to learn/remember the new vocabulary?
3. What do you do when you can’t remember the exact word you want to say?

The same strategies also help learners grasp the concept of interculturality. For example, when a native speaker visits the class, students can share their reactions:

1. What did you learn about the speaker’s interests? Are they the same as yours, as those of other people you know? Why or why not?
2. How do you react when you hear someone with an accent in the target language different from your teacher’s accent?

When teachers consistently encourage inquiry into cultural attitudes, learning process and language competencies, they help students build the skills that allow them to accurately self-assess and ultimately become autonomous learners. Learner autonomy is the goal of LinguaFolio, as well as an underlying motive for changing the perception of assessment.

Conclusion

Facing the challenges of a high stakes, assessment-driven, educational environment that threatens to cut programs and impede learning, many world language teachers struggle with professional realities. At the same time, teachers have the opportunity to control their plight and, in fact, turn it to their advantage by reframing the perception of assessment. A powerful tool, assessment can foster enormous change in teaching, learning and program design and growth. Well-constructed assessment systems that balance instrument types and examine learning with the intent to improve empowers independent learning.

In order to embrace this notion of assessment and apply it consistently means that teachers must be willing to become assessment-literate, develop the ability to recognize assessment opportunities in real life classroom-based tasks, create engaging formative assessments with rubrics that clearly define expectations, and guide learners through self-exploitation experiences that lead to autonomous learning. As a result, we may discover assessment to be our most powerful advocacy tool.

References


The National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL) is an educational community providing leadership in support of successful early language learning and teaching. Since its inception in 1987, NNELL continues to be an invaluable resource for educators, parents and policy makers in advocating K–8 programs of excellence in second language education.

**Language Aptitude Testing for Early Language (P-8) Learners (2006)**

All children are capable of learning other languages in the early grades when provided opportunities for quality instruction by teachers with high expectations for all students, including those with diverse needs. The belief of teachers, administrators and parents that there is a broad spectrum of talent and potential in the world language classroom and that students can and will succeed in learning a world language often makes it possible for students to succeed. This is further supported by second language acquisition research that justifies the inclusion of all students as language learners. As such, the need for aptitude testing of early language learners is not warranted within the context of these core beliefs. Equity of access to early language learning can no longer be denied to students solely based on the results of aptitude tests if we are to provide learners with the long sequences of instruction necessary to successfully interact with peoples of other cultures in the diverse communities in which we live and work.


A Test That Isn’t Torture: A Field-Tested Performance-Based Assessment

Mark Eastburn

Changing the paradigm

I have experimented with traditional tests, similar to the ones that I took as a high school Spanish student, but my apprehensive early language learners gave a mediocre performance that didn’t seem to reflect their actual skills. Reviewing their test results often left children feeling that, despite their hard work, they weren’t learning Spanish. Their confidence was shaken. Also, these tests did not measure the interpersonal and presentational modes of communication at all, and the measure of interpretive communicative ability they provided was limited to a relatively low number of vocabulary words and phrases. Still needing evidence of student progress for parents and administrators, I realized the need to break the old testing paradigm and discover a new way of demonstrating student language acquisition.

The performance-based evaluation that I now give to students every October and June is a wonderful opportunity to measure and showcase each child’s ability to read, listen, speak and exchange information in Spanish. This assessment also gives me a tremendous amount of evidence to document each student’s progress over the course of the year. As you will see, the performance assessment makes it possible to measure students at all ability levels at the same time. This is particularly helpful in Princeton, New Jersey, since I often have heritage speakers sitting next to first year students. The performance assessment creates an experience that motivates children, rapidly overcomes their test anxiety, and (could it be?) seems fun!

The Johnson Park School Fifth Grade Assessment

Johnson Park School is a K-5 public elementary school located in Princeton, NJ. We have a diverse student body, with approximately 15% of the children coming from Spanish-speaking households and another substantial minority that is composed of heritage speakers of more than 20 languages. We receive new students at every grade level each year, so we frequently face the challenge of creating Spanish classes that are simultaneously meaningful to heritage speakers and students of very limited proficiency. We teach our Spanish classes from kindergarten through fifth grade using content and culture rich thematic units to help us differentiate the learning effectively. Our assessment, therefore, needs to touch on all of the thematic units that we study in fifth grade in order to ensure an accurate measure of the important language functions taught throughout the year.

The unifying theme for these performance-based activities is exploration of a museum. The fifth grade Spanish curriculum in our district consists of five thematic units; the culminating assessment task for each unit represents a dif-
ferent part of our museum. My main goal is to measure each student's abilities in all three modes of communication as defined by the ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners: the interpretive mode, the presentational mode, and the interpersonal mode (Abbott, Boyles, & Miles, 1998). As a result, the test is divided into three parts.

Interpretive Assessment

Part one measures the ability of students to interpret language that they read and hear (interpretive mode). In this case, I ask students to draw a blueprint of our fictional museum based on a description that I read aloud and allow them to reference for themselves. I have written three different paragraphs that describe three different rooms in the building. Students receive a blank sheet of paper that has three rectangles. Each blank rectangle represents a different exhibit in the museum. After I give the initial instructions to place the task in context, I hand a copy of the complete description to each student and read aloud the first paragraph. Students then have fifteen minutes to draw everything that they can identify in this first exhibit. Of course, since this is not an art class, I emphasize that pictures do not need to be beautiful, only simple and clear. Very basic depictions of objects and actions are perfectly acceptable, as can be seen in figure 1. I also allow students to write notes on the test sheet in order to clarify drawings that they think may not be clear to me. I repeat this process for the two remaining rooms and collect all of the papers when students are finished. Since I usually teach for thirty-minute periods, the interpretive assessment takes approximately two class periods to complete.

I designed the detailed descriptions to differentiate among different levels of language comprehension. For example, one room in our museum focuses on our thematic unit: The Discovery and Conquest of the New World by Spain in the 1500s. The paragraph-long description of the exhibit contains simple, easily identifiable words like isla (island) and barco (boat) that a Novice-Low student would recognize, but it also includes strings of sentences that would only be comprehensible to a Novice-High learner: “Hay siete marineros en la cubierta del barco. Cuatro de éstos hombres tienen sus manos levantadas. Ellos están saludando a los indígenas en español!” (There are seven sailors on the deck of the boat. Four of these men have their hands raised. They are greeting the indigenous people in Spanish.) Since I am not grading artistic prowess, I would accept seven stick figures on a boat, four with their hands up, and a word bubble that contained the word hola (hello) as representing all of the relevant information contained in this passage. Student work is then graded on a five point rubric, where a “1” represents very little or no comprehension of the material presented, a “5” represents a nearly complete accounting of all details, and a “4” represents comprehension that would be expected of a typical listener/reader at the Novice-High level of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages scale. I marked the example shown as a “5” since practically every detail from the description is included, even the passage that states that the mast in the front with the triangular flag is higher than the mast in the back with the square flag. A “4” would have the right number of sailors in the boat and the correct number of indigenous people and other objects on the island, but might lack the very specific details like the difference in mast height that this example shows. The comprehension that would be expected of Novice-Mid students and Novice-Low students correspond respectively to the “3” and “2” on this rubric. A student who has drawn isolated words such as an island, a crocodile, and a boat would receive a “2,” while a boat with sailors in it and trees on the island (which are words that appear in contiguous sentences) would receive a “3.”

Presentational Assessment

The presentational part of this performance-based assessment measures each student’s ability to present information to an audience with “no direct opportunity for the active negotiation of meaning” (Abbott, Boyles, & Miles, 1998, p. 4). Fifth grade classes learn about art from the Spanish-speaking world. In part two of the assessment, I tell students that our museum is expanding to include an art exhibit. The museum
choose their own style or to pattern their technique after one of the artists that we have studied, such as Picasso or Botero. The test takers have complete freedom to include any objects, people, actions, landscapes, and weather phenomena in their drawings that are appropriate for school and they can describe in Spanish. After twenty-five minutes I collect their papers to discourage the addition of material or outside help. As in part one, I emphasize that I will not be considering their artistic ability in my grading. I do not expect them to recreate a masterpiece only that they can describe their work in Spanish. In fact, this past year I had two students who did not draw anything and then proceeded to give wonderful descriptions of everything that wasn’t on their paper!

On the second day, I select students at random to tell me about their creation. Students do not rehearse their presentations, but they may refer to their drawings and any notes from the prior class. Based on student presentations of their drawings over the last three years, I have developed a holistic rubric that defines the performances of every single student neatly and unambiguously in one of five categories. This rubric was adapted from the descriptions of different language ability levels in the New Jersey World Language Core Curriculum Content Standards and the College Entrance Examination Board.

5 Exceeds Expectations Novice-High

Spanish can be understood easily. The vocabulary is varied and provides a great deal of information. The speaker demonstrates confidence when communicating in Spanish, using strings of sentences that have continuity. Speaker does not need any assistance from the teacher when presenting.

4 Meets Expectations Novice-High

Speaker presents information in strings of sentences with frequent repetition of vocabulary and/or structures (e.g. "La niña tiene una camisa. La niña tiene dos brazos. La niña tiene una falda."). Student speaks with reasonable ease without needing assistance or encouragement from the teacher.

3 Meets Expectations Novice-Mid

Demonstrates basic ability to communicate in Spanish in a guided format and familiar context. Speaker can put words into simple phrases or sentences using familiar vocabulary and memorized structures. Spanish can be understood with some effort. Speaker may need some assistance with vocabulary and direction of the presentation from the teacher.

2 Meets Expectations Novice-Low

Demonstrates a limited ability to communicate in Spanish. Speaker produces lists of isolated words related to the drawing, but generally depends on the teacher’s support to communicate any additional information in phrases or sentences. Spanish may be halting and difficult to understand.

1 Does Not Meet Expectations Beginner

Description is in English or only consists of very few words in Spanish. Even with teacher support, speaker can produce very little Spanish in this context.

Interpersonal Assessment

The interpersonal assessment involves impromptu conversations and active negotiation of meaning among the participants. While interpersonal communication between students and the teacher, students and heritage speakers, and students and community members is a central focus of world language classes in Princeton, I have still had to revise this portion of the assessment several times due to the sheer challenge of getting Novice level fifth graders to talk to each other and maintain conversation in Spanish! Among the numerous activities that I have attempted in order to encourage students to talk to each other, the most effective has been an information gap activity in which students assume the roles of servers in the museum’s restaurant. This setting corresponds to our fifth grade thematic unit on food and places where people eat. In this scenario, four students acting as servers come together to discuss what is happening at the tables of patrons that they can see from a central vantage point. While pairs of students speaking to each other or individual students engaged in a conversation with the teacher would work well just as well for Part Three, I use groups of four in order to measure a greater number of students simultaneously during my thirty minute class periods. I currently represent the different tables with nine simple drawings. In the future, I plan to have actual photographs for each scenario.

Some of the actions and objects that appear in these scenes are repeated in multiple images, and others are unique to
each table. Students have been working with the vocabulary, gestures, and phrases over the course of learning about food and restaurants. For example, three pictures have a man asking for the check with his index finger and thumb clasped as if he were holding a pen. I place all nine drawings labeled with a letter on the board and ask four students to the front of the class. Each student secretly gets a copy of one of the pictures that appears on the board.

I then explain to students that they are servers who are working in the museum restaurant. Each server needs to figure out what is going on in the other servers’ areas (the pictures that they cannot see). They will need to accomplish this task by asking and answering questions that they create, and they may reference the nine pictures that they can see on the board. They may not, however, ask which letter label another child has. One student may ask another, “¿Hay un hombre que necesita la cuenta?” (Is there a man who needs the check?), to which the other student may reply, “Sí” (Yes) or maybe, “No, pero un hombre está comiendo” (No, but a man is eating). Each of the four students is given multiple opportunities to ask and answer questions, and they are graded both on the complexity of questions that they ask and the answers that they give. In this case detailed questions, follow up questions, and intricate answers will be awarded a “5” for far exceeding expectations for fifth grade Spanish; well-phrased questions and answers that show some detail will receive a “4” for meeting expectations of a Novice-High student; and simple questions and answers will earn a “3” for a Novice-Mid student. Questions and answers that are in English or incomprehensible are given a “1”. The “2” on my five-point rubric documented the ability of certain low-proficiency students to benefit from exposure to the language of higher-proficiency students in their group and mimic others questions and answers.

Results

The three paragraphs that form the interpretive part of the assessment were over 500 words. I wrote these paragraphs so that very few words are repeated in the description. In its current form, the test measures comprehension in a meaningful context and includes nouns, verbs in different conjugations, and description. Students showed no signs of burnout or exhaustion after 45 minutes. The assessment can easily be expanded as I decide to include additional vocabulary and language structures. I was able to rapidly grade the student drawings of the museum exhibits. I looked at each picture for only a minute to determine what the student was able to comprehend. I completed reviewing and grading all fifty-three students’ work in less than an hour and a half.

In the presentational assessment, many students created speeches that lasted three minutes or more. I allowed them to speak until they felt satisfied that they had done their best. If students were hesitant, I prompted them with questions in order to get them talking, but few needed much help. The open-ended nature of the assessment allowed students to show what they could do without limits on their production. Many of these children scored above the “3” that I was expecting for Novice-Mid students, and a rather large number exceeded my expectations for Novice-High speakers. I suspect that this achievement was primarily due to students’ freedom to choose their own topics and ability to work from a picture that they created. This familiarity lowered their anxiety and enabled them to speak from a much more comfortable mental state.

The interpersonal assessment, while still the most difficult portion of the test to administer and assess, was also successful in encouraging student communication. Students of lower proficiency were put at ease when other children in the group modeled appropriate questions and answers. No one froze when it was their time to speak, in part because I let my most confident students begin the questioning session each time.

Parts Two and Three were graded in real-time; that is to say that I was able to decide a number on the rubric for each student at the conclusion of his or her participation in the activity. This was another advantage to this method of assessment, since I did not need to set aside additional time to grade student work outside of class. I did, however, videotape these activities in order to review each child’s performance and determine if my previous decision was the most accurate. After a careful analysis, I realized that I did not need to change any of the numbers that I had originally assigned to students.

I give the same assessment to students at the beginning and the end of the year to demonstrate their progress in Spanish. Students are not allowed to see any part of the test in the intervening time, and yet most make substantial progress on the rubrics from October to June. The average progress, made by each student was 1.7 points on the five-point scale, so a typical student who scored a 2.3 on each part of the assessment in October would finish the year with a 4.0 on each rubric in June.
“I thought that this test was good because it was easier and had less pressure.” - Johnson Park student

Student Feedback

After completing the test this year, I asked all of my students to reflect on the nature of this assessment in comparison to the tests that they take in other subjects. Student opinion was overwhelmingly in favor of this type of examination. Joshan Bajaj, a student at Johnson Park School for the past two years, summed up the opinion of the majority: “The test was a lot of fun. I hope we will take this test again soon. The only thing is that the test could be a little harder.” Of course, this test is actually more comprehensive and rigorous than many traditional tests. It does seem easier to most students, primarily because it serves as an opportunity for students to demonstrate what they do know and can do, instead of highlighting everything that they cannot do in Spanish.

Other students responded anonymously with reactions of relief and brutal honesty, “I don’t like tests, but this was better than most tests”, and with interesting Spanish phrases “Me mucho me gusta dibujitos. No me gusta escribir” (I like the drawings. I don’t like writing). This test was a tremendously positive experience, in stark contrast to the traditional tests that students dread in other subjects. A few students even asked for more after we were finished!

Tailoring the Assessment

The Johnson Park Fifth Grade Assessment may be adapted to your classes. The unifying theme of a museum can work with almost any unit or chapter since there are museums for most everything. When you complete a content-rich thematic unit or even a chapter in a textbook that includes a great deal of vocabulary, asking children to draw a picture from a description effectively and quickly assesses your students’ ability to interpret language. Your description can be as simple or as complex as the language ability of your students, and differentiation of assessment can be established by including both simple and complex passages in one description. Student presentations with only a short opportunity for preparation, as we saw in the presentation assessment, may similarly be adapted to any theme, and the images in our information-gap activity for the interpersonal assessment could be recreated to include any additional words, settings, or concepts that you choose. While such activities do take time to prepare, the information that you gather on the progress of your students will serve as powerful evidence of their success in your class. This data speaks loudly to parents and administrators when we are advocating for our world language programs.

Conclusion

Of course, I could never have created this performance-based assessment entirely on my own. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to our principal, Dr. Robert Ginsberg, for having the vision to place world language assessment in our school’s goals during the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 academic years. In addition, I have benefited tremendously from the guidance and support of our former world language supervisor, Barbara Greenfeldt, our current world language supervisor, Priscilla Russel, and Greg Duncan of InterPrep, Inc. Thank you to all.

References


Mark Eastburn is a Spanish teacher for grades 3, 4, and 5 at Johnson Park School in Princeton, NJ. Prior to five years as a Spanish teacher, Mark worked as an Agroforestry Volunteer for the U.S. Peace Corps in Las Huacas de Quilla, a small village in the mountains of central Panama. For three weeks in 2003, he traveled to Bolivia and Argentina as a “Teacher in the Field” for the South American Low Level Jet Experiment (SAL-LJEX). In addition to his teaching duties, Señor Eastburn is writing on his first thematic unit book on endangered species in Latin America and culturally authentic crafts from Central and South America.
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The National Online Early Language Learning Assessment (NOELLA)

Carl Falsgraf & Ann Tollefson

An online assessment of early language learning that can serve as a measuring stick we can all use.

Origins

At some point, all teachers wonder if they are teaching the right things, if their students are really learning what they do teach, and whether students can use what they learn in the classroom in the outside world. Sometimes we hear back from teachers at upper levels that our former students are doing great – or not so great. What if we had a tool, a “measuring stick” to tell us about the proficiency of children coming into our classes, then tell us how our present students are doing, and how our former students do as they articulate upwards? If we all used the same measuring stick, wouldn’t it help us talk to each other and work together to build articulated programs that lead to higher proficiency?

The U.S. Department of Education’s Foreign Language Assistance Program has funded a consortium of six states (Georgia, Kentucky, New Jersey, South Carolina, Virginia, and Wyoming) to develop an online assessment of early language learning that can serve as a measuring stick we can all use. The consortium asked for support in developing an assessment that is affordable, reliable, accessible nationwide in every type of school, doesn’t take too much classroom time, and allows comparisons across all types of elementary-school language programs and models of delivery.

The consortium contracted with the Center for Applied Second Language Study (CASLS) at the University of Oregon to develop the assessment because of its excellent track record in developing online assessments. Also, the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) in Washington D.C. brings extensive experience in early language learning and assessment to this effort.

The assessment, the National Online Early Language Learning Assessment (NOELLA), is currently being developed and piloted to assess children’s learning in four languages: French, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, and Spanish. NOELLA is designed to be developmentally appropriate to measure the language learning of children in grades three through six across program models. Regardless of the curriculum of a particular program, or whether it is a FLES or an Immersion program NOELLA will give educators and parents a snapshot of how children are doing in the interpretive mode of communication (reading and listening) as well as in the presentational mode (speaking and writing). Because a computer program is incapable of truly negotiating meaning with a student, i.e. responding to a student’s oral or written communication as would another human being, it is unable to assess the interpersonal mode of communication. Assessments such as the SOPA and ELLOPA are designed to address that mode and can be used in conjunction with the NOELLA to provide a complete picture of proficiency.

Proficiency-based and Standards-based

Every program has particular goals, a particular curriculum, and most importantly, particular students. No one assessment could possibly capture everything that students learn in every program. Instead, NOELLA will attempt to measure the common denominator – proficiency in the interpretive and presentational modes – that all programs have in common. Teachers will continue to rely on internal assessments, interpersonal performances and portfolios to paint a full picture of student learning. NOELLA will be in the unique position to provide us all with a touchstone.

The first step in developing NOELLA, therefore, was to develop benchmarks: specific definitions of proficiency levels. Groups of elementary school teachers from the six states in the consortium, joined by teachers from other states, wrote those benchmarks using the National Standards, the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, the ACTFL K-12 Perfor-
The piloting process will ensure that every item measures proficiency fairly. Psychometricians on the CASLS staff will analyze data from around the country and eliminate any assessment items that do not meet standards of fairness and accuracy. If clearly proficient students get an item wrong, or clearly non-proficient students get it right, the item will be discarded because it gives us bad information about students’ proficiency. Only the items that pass muster will become part of the final assessment. Once the pilot is completed and the assessment validated, it will be available nationwide. The projected cost is $15-$20 per student for four skills, far less than any other assessment options.

How It Will Work

Here is what NOELLA might look like in your school. In the fall, you and your colleagues meet to discuss goals for the year. The discussion is informed by data collected nationally the year before by NOELLA telling you how similar students in similar programs around the country perform. At this time you can also view sample items and begin to think about how to prepare your students to take the NOELLA. As the year progresses, you can give practice tests provided for you by CASLS, as well as your own assessments to monitor student progress towards proficiency goals.

Then in the spring, your students go to the computer lab, or, if you don’t have one, go in small groups or as individuals to available computers, to take the NOELLA online. As with any school activity, they will need supervision, but an aide or librarian can do this if necessary. The oral skills (interpretive listening and presentational speaking) and literacy skills (interpretive reading and presentational writing) take about 25 minutes each. Your school can choose to assess both oral and literacy skills, or just one, depending on the goals and priorities of your program.

All of the items will be graphically rich, with instructions given orally by animated characters. NOELLA will automatically adapt the difficulty according to student performance. A student who gets many items correct will be challenged with more difficult items, while a student who misses many items will get easier ones. In this way, the computer will make sure that the assessment is at just the right level of difficulty for students, making them feel successful while giving you an accurate picture of where each is on the continuum of proficiency.

The most important part of NOELLA, however, is what happens after the test. The computer immediately scores and reports the interpretive tasks. Students’ proficiency levels on the presentational components of the assessment are assigned by human raters and, consequently, won’t be available for a few weeks. The overall score, however, is only a small piece of the picture.

NOELLA reports will also let you see how your whole program did in particular skills or item types. You will be able to look at individual students’ patterns of responses to identify weaknesses and strengths. You will also be able to compare your program’s performance to that of similar programs nationally. “Mining the data” in this way will be a new experience for most world language teachers.

CASLS will offer online or face-to-face training in “assessment literacy” to help teachers better understand the meaning of the data. Once teachers learn how to use this rich resource, it will provide a new way of reflecting on curriculum, instructional practices, and program design. The NOELLA experience will help us become reflective practitioners and improve student performance.

Carl Falsgraf, Director, the Center for Applied Second Language Studies, University of Oregon, falsgraf@uoregon.edu
Ann Tollefson, Foreign Language Content Specialist, Wyoming Department of Education, annt@bresnan.net
The academic setting

For four months out of the year, my fifth grade students live and breathe don Quixote. We meet three times a week for Spanish, but they are already focused on knights and castles, queens and chivalry. In order to make the story of Don Quijote de la Mancha come alive to fifth graders in Spanish, I rewrote several scenes from the novel into short plays that were appropriate to their interests and to their novice-high proficiency level. I chose a combination of scenes that offer humor, action, flirting, swordplay, culture and lots of drama. The unit culminates with a visit from don Quixote “himself”, a.k.a. a Spanish teacher from the Upper School, educated in Spain, who arrives in costume and stays in character. He “knights” some of the boys and “mistakes” some of the girls for his dear Dulcinea.

The Scenes We Use

We set the scene for the unit with an introductory reading and illustration. Alonso Quijana is at home with his books, his niece and his housekeeper. The next scene is a short play with the Innkeeper “knighting” him as don Quixote. In the third scene Quixote mistakes wine skins for monsters and attacks them. In the fourth scene two girls at the inn feign affection to play a trick on don Quixote and wind up tying his hand to their balcony. In the last scene we use, the Knight of the Moon defeats don Quixote and sends him home for a year.

Leading up to the Performance Assessment

Each scene is associated with a different assessment. To elicit interest in the scene, “Cuelga en el aire” (Hanging in the Air), students pull the following out of a closed bag: a rope, a lacy Spanish fan, a photo of a traditional Spanish balcony and a drawing of a forlorn Quixote hanging by his wrist. We do TPR with the props. After I have hooked them, the students see the rubrics for the performance assessment. Based on backward design, this clarifies in the beginning what the students need to do to be successful.

After examining the rubric, students read the scene silently and then aloud. We apply the vocabulary to more current topics, practice TPR Storytelling with structures from the scene, use some of the material for a little grammar practice and create original stories using the vocabulary. We use maps of Spain, make Venn diagrams to see comparisons between Quixote and other heroes, interview each other about emotions, do word games, and use the internet to look at the current nobility in the Spanish Royal Family web site.

The Performance Task

I opted for an integrated performance assessment that links the interpretive, interpersonal and presentation modes of communication to the same task. Students must understand the scene well enough to draw it, talk about it and write about it.

After several weeks, I give each of the students an inexpensive blank fan from Oriental Trading Company (www.handsonfun.com). Since students know they will be accountable for understanding the script in order to be able to draw it, they pay particular attention to the details. For the interpretive assessment the students use markers to draw on their fan what they remember from “Cuelga en el aire.” I assess their understanding of this scene by looking for accurate and nuanced depiction of the scene. To get a more artsy look, students can gently brush water over the finished drawing.
For the interpersonal assessment, students ask each other questions about the drawings on their fans. Their goal is to sustain a conversation for as long as possible. I give the students some time to think of good questions before we have the exchange: ¿Es de noche? ¿Por qué hay un sol? (It’s nighttime. Why is there a sun?) This gives the students, who will be evaluated on their ability to sustain the conversation, a chance to anticipate what might be asked. I also ask them to take the fans home before the interpersonal assessment and, for homework, describe their fan to someone from their family or friends. This provides additional practice for the student and is a powerful public relations tool. Children impress their parents with their fluid description. Students are evaluated on their vocabulary use, strategies to maintain communication and comprehensibility.

By the time the students have discussed their fans, and have answered and asked questions, they are usually quite ready to write a paragraph describing it for the presentation assessment. I insist that they use only words they know but will let them check with a dictionary or with me for spelling. I take a picture of them with their completed fan, attach it to the description and hang all of their work on the bulletin board in the hall. From there, I have a panoramic view of the work and can easily apply the rubric. I assess the students’ writing based on vocabulary use, language control and its comprehensibility.

**Conclusion**

Although I have been teaching Don Quixote for some years now, the unit was not originally created with backward design or performance assessment. I had to make some changes to help the students succeed in the performance environment. I have to look hard for authentic audiences for presentations and interpersonal exchanges. Sometimes I get lucky and there are competent older students, reliable pen pals, or Latino parents on hand. Other times, that is not realistic and the presentations and conversations take place within the class. I also find that some themes lend themselves better to real world applications than others do. Still, performance assessment gives me the data to show the students progress and allows me to evaluate them in the way I teach them. They can’t help but feel more engaged in a process where they demonstrate what they do know rather than expose their weaknesses. In the past I often tested discrete vocabulary items or grammar because it seemed easier. Now I use tasks that measure the most important skills. Performance assessment may not be easy, but it promotes better teaching and learning. As far as I’m concerned, the genie is out of the bottle and he’s not going back in.

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**Es la noche.**

Hay las estrellas y una luna.
La rosa rosada, la corona y los diablos cuernos simbolizan.
Concha y Maritones no dicen la verdad.
La cuerda en la rosa representa.
Dona Quijote cuegna en el aire.
El castillo simboliza que Don Quijote cree que la venta es un castillo.

Por Caterina MacLeod Daigle

Janet L. Glass (iguana@aol.com) teaches grades 3-5 at Dwight-Englewood School, NJ. She has been teaching K-12 Spanish for 30 years. She also taught Second Language Acquisition, Spanish Children’s Literature and Teaching Methods at the graduate level. Janet has received three NEH grants and awards for Creative Teaching, the Teaching of Culture and Outstanding Contribution to Foreign Language Education. She is a frequent presenter at conferences.
8 Assessment Tips
Easy to Implement Ideas for Thematic Units

Eugenia Porello

1 Know Where You Are Going

The first step in creating a Thematic Unit is the creation of appropriate assessment tools. Before starting to develop your lesson plans for the unit, ask yourself the following questions:

- What do I want my students to be able to do? (When setting your goals, think in terms of real communication like greeting other people appropriately, introducing yourself, ordering food or giving instructions)
- What language are they going to need to use? Think in terms of functional chunks of language (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, p. 37) and specific vocabulary

**Functional Chunks of Language**

"me llamo..." (my name is...)
"me gusta..." (I like...)
"Creo que no." (I don’t think so.)

**Specific Vocabulary**

"un cuarto" (a room)
"la piscina" (the swimming pool)
"cruzar" (to exchange greetings)

2 Have a Plan

After setting your communication and language goals you will need to figure out:

- How will I be able to tell if the students met the objectives? When designing your assessments, create tasks, exercises and projects that “force” them to use those language functions that you had in mind.

- How am I going to prepare the students to perform well in these assessments? When planning out your lessons, try to use teaching strategies that are communicative, student-centered, and as real-to-life as possible. Make it a point to use authentic products such as songs, legends, stories directly from the culture rather than textbook materials

3 Map It Out

Here is a key rule:

Be sure to teach in the same way that you will assess your students. Your assessment should correlate with your everyday lesson plans. For instance if your project involves the creation of a dialogue, the students should see dialogues (puppets, videos, heritage speakers), practice their own impromptu dialogues with different scenarios and evaluate their own performance based on the rubric. If students waste a lot of energy to adapt to the test itself, the assessment becomes an obstacle rather than a tool for measuring progress.

4 Test the Test

Your assessment (created or modified) must:

- Reflect the objectives targeted in your thematic unit. (Make your students aware of those objectives at the beginning of the unit)
- Feature deliberately planned tasks that are real-to-life, intrinsically motivating and meaningful to you and the students
- Have clearly stated and measurable expectations defined in a rubric, written in student-friendly language. (This rubric must be available to students before starting the project)
- Provide a realistic time frame for completion that is flexible but controlled
• Include all the necessary forms and paper trail to track student work.
• Display a variety of samples by fellow students to illustrate the spectrum of project quality from great to poor.
• Appeal to a variety of intelligences and sometimes offer different options for the output.

Rubrics are a “must have” when evaluating performances. Well-designed rubrics are useful because they...

• Set clear expectations and prevent misunderstandings of the “you-didn’t-say-that-was-important” variety. Students know exactly what to do and how they will be scored.
• Take the mystery out of the grade.
• Provide an excellent tool to guide the growth of student skills
• Allow for feedback from the teacher and other students on skill strengths and weaknesses

There are many types of rubrics: holistic, analytical, graded and longitudinal. You can find online tools to help you create them. But, it will not be long before you will realize these simple rubrics truths:

• The ACTFL performance guidelines (ACTFL, 1998) take the guesswork out of what is an appropriate level of performance to expect from our learners.

• Creating and modifying rubrics is time consuming. Never underestimate the amount of effort required to make a good rubric. Have it critiqued by colleagues; make sure you wrote it in language students can understand; express every item in measurable terms; and think about outlier performances such as those by heritage speakers.

• You can always improve a rubric. Each time you use a rubric, you will find ways to make it more measurable, friendly and descriptive.

• The best rubric is not guaranteed to be child proof. Your students may hone in on those unsuspected grey areas in your rubric, giving them exciting new grounds to challenge a grade. Don’t despair! Smile, be fair, learn from your mistakes and edit the gray area out of the rubric for next time.

**Make it Measurable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>excellent</td>
<td>extensive and appropriate vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beautiful</td>
<td>colorful, clear and clean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>great performance</td>
<td>good eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fantastic delivery</td>
<td>evidence of rehearsal, script not read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good communication</td>
<td>used communication strategies to maintain conversation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here are a few suggestions to smooth the implementation.

• Present the project to your students with a complete packet that includes the description of the project, the rubric, the time frame and support material. Students can stay better organized when they have an individual folder for the duration of the task.

• Discuss the objectives, expectations and time frame with your students.

• Consider appropriate options when forming groups. For example, students submit a list of the three partners they prefer. This can be a learning experience if students tell why they think they could work well with such people in the target language.

• Set in motion all the checks and balances that will allow you to keep everyone honest, speaking the target language and on task.
8 Closure for Everyone

Before rushing on to the next big project, closure can solidify the lessons learned.

- The class can reflect on what they learned and where to go from here.
- Students can provide suggestions for improving the task and rubric.
- Student can share techniques that they learning from each other’s performance.
- They can share their products with other classes, other schools, parents, on DVD with students from other countries.

References


Online Resources for this Issue

The Virtual Assessment Center hosted by the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (www.carla.com/assessment/VAC/) offers an excellent overview of assessment. It answers essential questions like “Why assess?” and “What am I assessing?”

Center for Applied Linguistics (www.cal.org) offers information about oral proficiency testing for early language learners. Also available are the Foreign Language Test Database and the CAL digests.

The Consortium for Assessing Performance Standards (www.flenj.org/caps/) offers free assessment tasks for download centered around themes and the three modes of communication. Each thematically organized assessment includes the task and rubrics. See opposite page for the article.

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (www.actfl.org) The ACTFL performance guidelines mentioned in several articles are available in the publications section of the website. The Executive Summary of the of the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning is also available online.

Center for Applied Second Language Studies at the University of Oregon. Visit http://casl.uoregon.edu/ for more information on the NOELLA testing. This attractive site includes articles and resources to support teachers and “proficiency-based tools for lifelong language learning and teaching.” See article on page 18.
Creating an Assessment Library

Greg Duncan, Jacqueline Gilbert, Mary Mackenzie, Carol Meulener, Martin Smith, Beatrice Yetman, and Rosanne Zeppieri

The Consortium for Assessing Performance Standards is a New Jersey Grant Project that created a database of thematically organized, integrated performance assessment tasks at the benchmark levels of proficiency, novice-mid, intermediate-low and pre-advanced as defined by the ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners. The assessment tasks are available to world language teachers in the state of New Jersey and nationwide to measure achievement of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for World Languages or the national Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century.

Background

In 1996, the New Jersey Department of Education adopted Core Curriculum Content Standards in seven academic areas. Standards 7.1 (Communication) and 7.2 (Culture) mandated K-12 world languages programs in all districts and targeted the 2001 school year for assessment of 4th, 8th and 11th graders' attainment of those standards. For the next several years, there was a flurry of excitement and activity in the field as districts worked to expand their existing language programs to include elementary and middle school students. Districts focused on hiring qualified teachers, training those teachers in second language acquisition theory, proficiency-based strategies and writing curriculum. The state released grant monies to run institutes in the northern, central, and southern parts of the state. The Foreign Language Educators of New Jersey (FLENJ) collaborated with the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) to offer professional development opportunities that support standards-based teaching. Additionally, the NJDOE sanctioned emergency certifications and universities established graduate programs targeting educators new to the field.

As the state testing program unfolded, it became clear that the NJDOE would not be able to assess all content areas. When a curricular area is not assessed, in the minds of many administrators it is not as important. When cuts become necessary, it is the areas that are not assessed that are the first to go. So with budget failures, the introduction of No Child Left Behind legislation and the absence of a state test, districts began to limit or eliminate elementary foreign language programs. The bright future of world languages in the state began to dim.

In this atmosphere a group of New Jersey supervisors formed a consortium that received a Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) grant to train teachers to develop performance-based assessments in the three modes of communication in order to assess the state standards. Any district can use these benchmark assessments to ascertain the proficiency level of students in their programs and to validate the efficacy of curriculum and instruction. They assess what learners can do with the language they are acquiring, rather than only what they know about its form and function.

Are Students Achieving the Standards?

There were three major questions we sought to answer with our work. First, what should students know and be able to do? To answer this question we looked to the Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1999) and the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for World Languages (New Jersey Department of Education, 2004). Second, how well should students be expected to perform the standards? The ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners (ACTFL, 1998) guided the answer to this question. This article addresses our third question: How do we know that our students are achieving the standards?
Our grant project had several goals:

- To provide research-based, high quality staff development to all world languages teachers in the consortium districts
- To develop a database of thematically organized, integrated performance assessment tasks at the benchmark levels of proficiency at novice-mid, intermediate-low and pre-advanced as defined by the ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners (ACTFL, 1998)
- To use the performance assessment tasks as a program evaluation tool to measure attainment of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for World Languages and the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning
- To disseminate assessment tasks to world language teachers in the State of New Jersey and nationwide to measure achievement of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for World Languages (New Jersey Department of Education, 2004) or the national Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century (ACTFL, 1999)
- To provide a design template for the development of benchmark assessments that can be utilized by school districts nationwide

**What are Thematically Organized Assessments?**

Thematically Organized Assessments (TOAs) are performance-based assessment tasks that target a certain proficiency level and assess the learner's ability to communicate across three modes of communication: interpretive (listening or reading); interpersonal (speaking/listening interaction or reading/writing interaction); and presentational (speaking or writing). Each TOA will contain one task for each of the three modes of communication.

Like all performance-based assessments, TOAs measure what the learner can do with the language he has been learning, rather than emphasizing what he knows about it. The TOA concept draws its inspiration from Integrated Performance Assessments (IPAs) that were created by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, n.d.).

All good performance-based assessment tasks, including TOAs, center around simulations of real-life tasks. These types of tasks:

1. capture student interest due to their relevance to the real world
2. show the student that he is learning language that “matters”
3. engender student commitment to complete the tasks in a worthy manner because they lead to language functionality in real-life ways

One of the first things teachers will see in the TOAs is the great attention paid to creating tasks that “matter” in developing an ability to use language in daily, real-world ways. Likewise, we have made every effort to ensure that support materials for the various tasks of the TOAs are themselves authentic documents. To capture their interest and commitment, students listen to audio texts that native speakers of the language might hear and read passages that would be common to the everyday reading habits of native speakers. While the text is authentic, specific tasks of the TOAs are tailored to the language proficiency target. When students show their interpersonal and presentational speaking skills, they simulate functions in real-life that would require these abilities.

Thematically Organized Assessments are intended to assess student language ability at benchmark “moments” along the language learning continuum (for example, at the end of elementary, middle or high school) or at the end of units of instruction. There are thematically organized assessments developed in a variety of languages; French, German, Italian and Spanish. Even though the task is language specific, teachers can adapt tasks for their own languages, by finding an appropriate text for the interpretive task and making the necessary modifications.
How Did We Develop These Assessments?

These assessment tasks called “Thematically Organized Assessments” are the product of the Consortium for Assessing Performance Standards (CAPS), comprised of four New Jersey public school districts; East Brunswick, Edison, West Orange and West Windsor-Plainsboro.

Foreign language supervisors in each of the four districts selected approximately 40 elementary, middle and high school foreign language teachers to be trained and then to develop these tasks. We began development in 2003 and completed in spring, 2006. This group of teachers, along with their supervisors, participated in a three-year process that involved training, development, field-testing and final editing of the TOAs.

Training

To begin the process, teachers and supervisors participated in a three-day training session. The purpose of this training was to ensure that all participants understood the concept of proficiency and how to assess for proficiency. The Center for Applied Linguistics trained the elementary teachers on the use of the Student Oral Performance Assessment (SOPA). The middle and high school teachers focused on the Oral Proficiency Interview-Modified (for Novice and Intermediate speakers) with trainers from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Subsequent to this training all participants learned about the design of performance-based assessment tasks and rubric development. Training sessions were comprehensive and spanned an entire academic year. (For further information on assessment see the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) virtual assessment center, information on page 24.

Development

Following training, teachers participated in a development process that included oversight and guidance by district supervisors as well as outside consultants responsible for training and development. An intense vetting, or professional review process was used throughout multiple iterations of the TOAs as they made their way through the development pipeline. This process involved the outside consultant, supervisors and teachers working collaboratively to review all the tasks developed.

Field-Testing

Participant teachers field-tested the tasks with their own students to determine how well they worked and to ascertain ways to improve the TOAs. Their colleagues were encouraged to field test the TOAs with their students, adding another layer of feedback and information to the development process. After field-testing their tasks, teachers shared samples of student work with colleagues and received feedback on the TOAs and their implementation.

Final Editing

Finally, supervisors from the four New Jersey districts, along with project consultants, reviewed, edited and modified the TOAs to make them available in an easily usable format for foreign language teachers outside the project.

Why assess this way?

Language learning today focuses on teaching learners how to use language to communicate effectively in real world situations. Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century (ACTFL, 1999) calls for students to be communicatively competent—to be able to use language for meaningful purposes. In matters of diplomacy, economy and security, the United States needs a citizenry that is communicative in languages in addition to English. And students enroll in language courses because they, too, would like to become effective users of different languages. Foreign language teachers all across the U.S. are striving to rethink, redesign and retool to teach in a way that will create citizens that can use languages in this way.

As foreign language classroom instruction has shifted its focus from knowledge of grammar rules to students being able to use language in meaningful, real world contexts, the emphasis of foreign language assessment has also shifted. For assessment to be authentic, and thus fair to the student, it must measure what students have learned to do and in the manner they learned it. If students spend their class time in learning how to “do” foreign language, assessment must measure the same thing. TOAs measure student second language ability that mirrors how and what they learned in the instructional setting.
How Could You Use the Thematically Organized Assessments?

Teachers who wish to become acquainted with the concept of performance-based assessment and teachers proficient in their use will find well-developed tasks to incorporate into the classroom experience. Foreign language teachers might use TOAs for a number of different reasons:

- To get acquainted with performance-based assessment by looking at a number of carefully crafted example tasks;
- To gain greater understanding of the characteristics of well-constructed rubrics;
- To experiment with performance-based assessment by using a few of the TOAs;
- To incorporate TOAs into an assessment program for the classroom;
- To use TOAs as targeted performances at the end of thematic units of instruction when using the backward design concept (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005).

In the K-12 language learning continuum, where would the TOAs be used — elementary, middle or high school?

While the TOAs were created with a certain age learner in mind, they are far more characteristic of proficiency levels than chronological ages or even cognitive development. Each TOA was designed to measure performance that would be characteristic of learners who evidence a specific proficiency ability. The three levels for which tasks were developed and benchmarked are:

- Novice-Mid
- Intermediate-Low
- Pre-Advanced (Intermediate-High)

Although these assessments were developed with a learner age-range in mind, they target a certain proficiency level. They can be adapted for learners anywhere along the K-12 school continuum. For example, both an elementary student and a 10th grader who had not had significant foreign language learning experience prior to high school would most appropriately be assessed using TOAs for the Novice-Mid range of proficiency. Intermediate-Low assessments can be used with 6th or 7th grade middle school students who have completed an elementary school foreign language program and a high school junior or senior who began foreign language studies in high school. Pre-Advanced tasks assume a long, uninterrupted sequence of language learning and would be appropriate for high school juniors or seniors who began study in elementary school.

What are the content/theme areas of the TOAs?

All of the Thematically Organized Assessments center on a pre-identified theme. Many of these themes are familiar to language teachers and language learners.

- Art Appreciation
- Art of Well-Being
- Celebrations and Traditions
- Discovering the World Around Me
- Entertainment
- Environment
- How do I spend my free time?
- Legends and Folktales
- Lifestyles
- Relationships
- Work and Career

What does a TOA actually look like?

Each TOA is anchored to a proficiency target (Novice-Mid, Intermediate-Low or Pre-Advanced), a theme and the three modes of communication (interpersonal, interpretive and presentational). TOAs are intended to measure the full range of student language proficiency level and ability across the three modes of communication: interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational.
The first page of a TOA provides the following information:
- Title of the TOA
- Theme of the TOA
- Targeted proficiency level
- An overview of the three assessment tasks for the TOA

Once past the opening page of the TOA, the reader finds the three different assessment tasks: first, interpretive, second, interpersonal and last, presentational. Each task follows a standard template that includes the following components:
- Task Title
- Theme
- Level (Novice-Mid, Intermediate-Low, Pre-Advanced)
- National Standards Goals
- Communicative Mode
- Time Frame (time needed to complete the task)
- Description of the Task (always stated in student-friendly language for direct classroom use)
- Materials Needed
- Teacher Notes (any information that would be helpful for the using teacher to have in advance)
- Adaptations (This section is for teachers to note any changes that could be made to meet varying learner needs, such as gifted and talented and special education.)

This standard template of information summarizes the important elements of the assessment task. Following this page are any support materials that are required to implement the task, Internet links with pertinent information and any activity sheets that might be required for the task. Last is the rubric for evaluating the student’s performance for the particular task. Many of the rubrics found in the TOAs are tailor-made for the specific tasks; others may be generic rubrics developed by project teachers to measure interpretive, interpersonal and presentational tasks across the three targeted proficiency levels of Novice-Mid, Intermediate-Low and Pre-Advanced.

What has the impact of this project been on our curriculum, instruction and assessment practices?

As a result of the intensive work with our teachers over the three years of this grant project, we have seen a transformation in the way the participants talk about and teach world languages. Although all of the supervisors and teachers were familiar with the standards, create assessments that measure communication has influenced how we go about our daily work. Each district is rewriting curriculum documents to more fully reflect the standards. In several of the districts, the mid-term and final exams are now modeled after the TOAs. Perhaps the biggest change has been in how each teacher is approaching their daily planning and instruction. Teachers report that they are much more sensitive to the proficiency level of the activities they use. They feel they are better able to challenge students to move up the proficiency scale and to take advantage of the “teachable moment” to help students improve.

How can I access the assessment tasks and rubrics?

Go the www.flenj.org and click on “Consortium for Assessing Performance Standards.” On this web site you will be able to access the 70 assessment tasks developed, rubrics and samples of student work for some of the tasks. We hope you find our work as valuable as we have found our project to be for our students and teachers.

References
Quick Takes

This new feature introduces products that may interest early language educators.

¡La Chispa del Béisbol!

This 12-minute DVD features spontaneous interviews with four native Spanish-speaking players from the minor league baseball team, the New Jersey Jackals. Students will hear four different accents as these engaging young players and their coach talk candidly about themselves, their lives in their home countries, the basics of baseball and the special contributions Latinos bring to baseball in the United States. Conversation touches on topics such as geography, clothing, numbers, age, and family in the context of baseball. It includes access to a downloadable 12-page Teacher's Guide of lesson plans, graphic organizers, listening comprehension sheets, vocabulary lists, pre- and post-viewing activities, maps, visual aids, connections to the National Standards, lists of resources and links. The video is best for upper elementary or middle school students at the Novice-high level. ($29.95 per DVD available from www.chispa-productions.com or Ruth Kunstadter, info@chispa-productions.com)

Strengths

Engaging topic, full of visuals, music and other cues to enhance learning, teacher's guide, current baseball players - Paris Granville

Chinese for Kids Vols. 1 and 2

Language Tree offers an interactive DVD to help children learn Mandarin Chinese. It combines live action Mandarin speakers with 3-D animated characters including Benboo the Shih Tzu puppy to teach useful everyday phrases, colors, numbers and toys. Volume 1 centers on a birthday party with songs, food and games. Volume 2 continues to teach useful phrases and vocabulary words appropriate for everyday situations, such as eating and drinking, playing, getting ready for bed and sleep. It also explains Chinese tones in a comprehensible manner. This video is best for families who wish to teach their children some Mandarin and Mandarin teachers looking for quality substitute teacher lessons. ($24.99 available from www.language-tree.com/mandarin.html or 1-888-828-2552)

Strengths

Attractive graphics, native-speaking children, engaging songs and contexts, learning booklet, interactive games - Paris Granville

Die Umwelt und ich

This thematic unit for middle school by Corinna Freimann Cavanaugh and Ester Eichler is sponsored by The American Association of Teachers of German (AATG). The unit places emphasis on how people affect the environment. It reflects themes from middle school science and social studies. The unit centers on the story of an alien who observes the ecosystems of the earth and creates a solution to the crisis. The unit comes as a CD-Rom containing, an overview, planning framework, daily lesson plans, summary of best practices, PowerPoint presentation, and student worksheets. ($25.00 for AATG members; $50.00 for non-members. The unit can be accessed on the Kinder lernen Deutsch page of the AATG Web site www.aatg.org as item #64671)

Strengths

Standards-based, backward designed, story form, content-based, complete lesson plans with objectives and performance descriptors - Paris Granville

Move Your Students to Paris

Have you always longed to take your students to Paris but never dared? In Move Your Students to Paris, Sue Fenton, a.k.a. Madame Fifi, has put together a resource guide with step by step instructions on how to transport your students to la belle France, get them settled in apartments, and unleash them in the city of lights without ever leaving your classroom. The unit helps you immerse your students in French for a year with Parisian realia.

Ms. Fenton is at once a real estate agent, tour guide, social director, personal shopper, gourmet advisor, and, culture maven. She shares web-based and communication strategies to negotiate this venue and simulate adventures that touch on every aspect of Parisian life. So climb the Eiffel tower or visit the sewers. Buy a Carte Orange and ride the Métro. Take your basket and go to the market. Hit the monuments and museums. Café hop. Take a class at the Sorbonne. Buy a dog or a cat. Shop for shoes. Buy expensive chocolate. Look for bargains. Eat snails. Experience the French bureaucracy. ($29.95 available from Madame Fifi Publications, 73 White Bridge Rd. Suite 103, Nashville, TN 37205 or www.madamefifi.com)

Strengths

Thematic design, engaging topic for middle school students, good value, created by Sue Fenton, communication strategies - Marilyn Sable
Best Practices

Jani's Jensen - NNELL President

Foreign Language Instruction: Implementing the Best Teaching Methods was the focus of the Spring 2006 issue of Research Points published by the American Educational Research Association (AERA). AERA is an internationally recognized professional organization whose primary goal is advancing educational research and its practical application. The Research Points issue is timely in nature given the call for expansion of language programs due to economic and security concerns and the realization of the importance of infusing the study of languages and cultures from different regions of the world into the K-12 core curriculum.

The issue addresses three questions commonly asked about foreign language learning and teaching that are essential for implementing effective language programs:

Should Foreign Language Learning Start Early?

The issue researcher, Robert DeKeyser, and writer, Chris Zurawsky, provide an appropriate answer to this question: "The answer depends on what you want to achieve and how much you are willing to invest." The National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL) endorses age and developmentally appropriate instruction that focuses on meaningful and relevant tasks, activities and assessments emerging from academic content in other curricular areas as well as nonacademic areas of interest and importance to the learner. NNELL also supports instruction by teachers that have high levels of language and culture proficiency and who embrace the philosophy of expanded language curriculum, moving from a narrow approach where the content of language instruction is only language, to encompass the idea that language is an effective tool to communicate content.

The AERA issue strongly supports total immersion programs. However, such programs are not widely implemented in schools. Currently, due to the demands of mandated assessments and accountability in several core areas, along with common misperceptions about the model itself, many districts are not willing to allocate resources to the development of such programs. However, dual immersion programs are gaining popularity, especially in lower socio-economic districts, where minority students are performing at the same level or outperforming students not enrolled in such programs on state assessments while also achieving growing levels of language proficiency. In addition, districts with well articulated Foreign Language in the Elementary School (PLES) programs that offer a solid foundation in oral language and listening skills, meet 3-5 times a week for 150 minutes or more, and introduce literacy and writing skills in fifth grade, report students are primed to enter middle school programs and remain enrolled in language courses throughout high school. The point is that proficiency-based program models designed around the principles of standards-based learning and teaching will lead to higher student achievement and motivation to continue language study and are worthwhile maintaining until funding is available to widely support full immersion programs.

What Teaching Methods Should Be Used?

With regard to older learners, researchers advocate a "balanced instructional approach." Since students come to foreign language classrooms with different interests and varying intelligences and learning styles, instructional activities and assessments should reflect these needs. NNELL supports learning and teaching strategies at all levels of foreign language instruction that are multifaceted and based on students' active involvement with their own learning. Additionally, teaching methods aligned with curriculum and assessment that is performance-based provide students opportunities to acquire language and strategies that will enable them to communicate for different purposes as they progress along the proficiency continuum.

Can Everyone Learn Foreign Languages Well?

As stated in the issue, there are many variables that contribute to student success with learning a foreign language, the most important being "aptitude" and motivation. In examining these factors further, it is worth noting that the emphasis on the learning of the language system to the exclusion of meaningful, interactive learning has historically led to the frustration and dissatisfaction of students regardless of language aptitude! If the primary goal of language instruction is to prepare students for authentic language use in the real world, then the organization of curriculum and instruction should reflect that purpose. NNELL contends that an intrinsically interesting, cognitively engaging and age-appropriate instruction will enhance the motivation of increasing numbers of students to become, at the very least, functionally proficient in a language, regardless of aptitude. With this comes the realization that learning a language is a useful life skill regardless of what job or choice of career students may elect to pursue.

NNELL commends the AERA for addressing these important issues for their readers, many of whom are policy makers and school administrators. There is a critical need for all stakeholders to understand the components of quality language programs that will lead to higher levels of language proficiency for American students.
Summary

This 387 page book entitled, Content-Based Second Language Teaching and Learning by Marjorie Hall Haley and Theresa Y. Austin, takes a comprehensive look at current and past practices in Foreign Language education. It provides a solid foundation of language acquisition theory, methods and approaches in language teaching, planning curriculum and assessment, strategies for interactive communication, working with diverse learners and integrating technology. This scope of the book is much broader than the title suggests. An exhaustive list of methods and approaches are described and compared based on interactive elements, content-based applicability, help for diverse learners and assessment. The section on planning offers templates and guidelines for long-term and daily planning. The next section examines the variety of ways to assess content and performance: portfolios, dialogue journals, inquiry challenges, integrated performance assessments, retelling, anecdotal records and self-assessment. Several chapters focus on interactive communication in listening, reading, speaking and writing. There are also two chapters on diverse learners and technology.

Interaction

The subtitle of the book is An Interactive Approach. The authors have created a book that models many of the techniques that they espouse. Beyond the explanatory text, each chapter includes:

- This Chapter will feature
- Setting the Stage
- What Do Teachers Think?
- Case Studies
- Action Research Projects
- Glossary of Terms
- References

The chapters also include many interactive elements such as “Think, Pair, Share”, “Reflect and Respond” and comprehension questions. Certain chapters also contain specific supports such as templates for planning and a sample unit on the wonderful world of whales. The book links to on-line support where students can type in answers to questions and view videos of the different teaching methods. Although not explicitly stated, the videos appear to be teaching English to English Language Learners. If you decide to use the web resources, you only need the quicktime player installed not all the other plug-ins that the browser checkup recommends.

Audience

The broad interest of this book would appeal to teachers of any language. Examples are provided for teachers of English and foreign languages. The complete background of foreign language pedagogy makes it especially appropriate to pre-service teachers. Veteran teachers will still find the sections on assessment and interactive communication refreshing.

Conclusion

Content-based Second Language Teaching and Learning takes advantage of modern technology to transcend mere text. The comprehensive nature of the book makes it perfect as a reference volume on second language teaching. The title is somewhat misleading. Although teaching and learning are examined in the context of content-based instruction, the chapters touch on all aspects of second language learning and teaching.


Exit Point:  
Reading and Writing at the End of the FLES Program

Tammy Dann

Background

The West Des Moines Community School District began its content-related foreign language in elementary school (FLES) program in 1994 with first grade, adding another grade each year. By 1999 the program included all students in first through sixth grade. In all grades, teachers instruct almost entirely in Spanish. In the lower grades, the focus has been on developing listening and interpersonal skills. As students progress through the program and enter the upper grades, they have more opportunities to develop their reading and writing skills in Spanish.

The students and schools of the West Des Moines Community School District are diverse in a number of ways. Between 4.8% and 47.5% of students receive free or reduced lunches depending on the school site. Students are from many different cultures, with over twenty different languages spoken in their homes. In the FLES program, 80.6% of the students are Caucasian, 4.7% are African American, 6.0% are Asian, and 7.7% are Hispanic.

In 2003, the FLES program celebrated the beginning of its tenth year. The teachers had by now revised and improved the existing curriculum. It was time to turn to the new challenge of creating an end of program assessment for sixth grade. In previous years, teachers administered the SOPA (Student Oral Proficiency Assessment) to a few students from each elementary school. This assessment provided opportunities for program evaluation that led to change and growth. However, the teachers wanted an assessment they could administer to all students in sixth grade to provide a summative evaluation that clearly demonstrated their reading and writing skills.

In the age of “No Child Left Behind”, the teachers needed data to show to what extent the students were developing their Spanish language skills. They felt that this data could be especially valuable to demonstrate the importance of the elementary foreign language program to administrators and secondary foreign language teachers. The assessments would also provide the FLES teachers with opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of reading and writing instruction within the program.

Most full-time FLES teachers in the West Des Moines program teach about 650 students, including approximately 170 sixth graders. They teach an average of forty-eight classes each week, in twenty-four different classrooms. Due to the large number of students, the teachers chose to develop traditional-style tests that allow them to collect important data quickly. In the future, they may also evaluate listening and interpersonal communication.

Prompts and Criteria

The reading assessment is a two-paragraph passage that tells a story using familiar vocabulary that has been spiraled throughout the program. At the end of the passage are six multiple-choice questions with one best answer (Figure 1). The questions and answers are written in English to test the students’ comprehension of Spanish, rather than their ability to find the answer in the text. They are scored based on the total number of questions answered correctly. As with the reading assessments administered in the regular classroom, the FLES reading assessment includes both literal and inferential questions. There are three literal and three inferential questions.

Figure 1

Reading Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>La familia Pereira vive en el sur de Texas. En la familia hay cuatro personas: el padre, la madre, y sus dos hijos. Pablo tiene once años, Pablo tiene doce años.</th>
<th>Pablo no come y no cena.</th>
<th>Pablo no come y no cena.</th>
<th>Pablo no come y no cena.</th>
<th>Pablo no come y no cena.</th>
<th>Pablo no come y no cena.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>En la familia van a ir de vacaciones a Chile. Primero, van a la ciudad.</td>
<td>All have red and yellow colors. Segundo, van a la montaña.</td>
<td>All have blue and green shirts.</td>
<td>Buses en el campo.</td>
<td>Buses en el campo.</td>
<td>Buses en el campo.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. They are going to study.  
2. They are going to go swimming.  
3. They are going to go swimming.  
4. They are going to go swimming.  
5. They are going to go swimming.  
6. They are going to go swimming.
Students experience this format throughout the school year. In the fall of the year, most sixth graders interpret Spanish text through teacher-made postcards. These texts incorporate information about Central American countries and the imaginary author of the postcard. Unlike text and stories in lower grades, these postcards do not use pictures to reinforce understanding. Students are familiar and comfortable with the vocabulary and it is a good transition to the type of text they will encounter at the secondary level. The students work with multiple-choice inferential and literal questions in English in the regular classroom when taking the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and district reading assessments.

For the writing assessment, teachers ask the students to write a letter to a Spanish-speaking student who is moving to their town with the instructions and prompts in English. Students write their letter on the back of the prompts and rubric page. As they write, they can refer to the prompts on the other side.

Included on the bottom of the assessment is the rubric used to rate the students’ writing skills. A “2” on the rubric described skills and vocabulary that the teachers felt an average student would demonstrate. Students with weaker skills would earn a “1” and students with exceptional skills would earn a “3”. The teachers created the criteria for the assessments after discussing how they evaluate a well-written letter from a student.

When writing the assessments, the FLES teachers chose performance targets for the number of students who would reach a level considered proficient in reading and writing:

1. Reading: The majority of students will correctly answer at least two inferential questions.
2. Reading: The majority of students will correctly answer at least two literal questions.
3. Writing: The majority of students will score at least a “2” on the writing assessment.

Procedure

The FLES teachers administered the writing assessment to all sixth grade students during a predetermined week in March and the reading assessment in a week in early April. Though classes are normally taught in Spanish, the teacher gave the instructions for these assessments in English to ensure understanding and avoid inadvertently providing vocabulary to the students. Before beginning the writing assessment, the teacher presented the rubric criteria and read through the list of prompts. For the reading assessment, students read through the paragraphs and questions, and then circled the most correct answer. The teachers also provided modifications for students whose Individualized Educational Plan require tests to be read aloud. Students took up to thirty minutes to finish each assessment and students who were absent simply skipped the test.

Since each question has only one correct answer, teachers can quickly check their own students’ reading assessments. Each student’s score is entered into a spreadsheet and broken down into the number of literal and inferential questions answered correctly.

The child’s FLES teacher and another foreign language teacher scored the writing assessment using the analytic rubric that measures the number of topics, the complexity of sentences and language control. When scoring the writing sample, the first teacher writes the score in the corner and turns down the corner of the test, hiding the score. A second teacher scores the test without knowing the first teacher’s score. The two numbers are averaged to ensure a level of validity across the classes. We submit these data by spreadsheet to the Heartland Area Education Agency for analysis and desegregation by school, gender, and race.

Results

To improve reading and writing skills of all students for the next year, teachers discuss the data analysis. They consider the number and nature of the students who did not take the test, the effect of teaching strategies, novice teachers, population shifts and teacher turnover. Changes to the curriculum are proposed to help students better develop reading and writing skills.
In 2004, the first year of the assessments, 86.7% of students tested correctly answered at least two inferential, 86.9% correctly answered at least two literal questions and 72.4% scored a “2” or above on the writing assessment (Culver, 2004). After the first year of testing, the predetermined goals were met.

The 2005 assessments showed improved scores. 87.8% of students met the inferential skill goal. 90.1% met the literal skill goal and 74.2% met the writing goal (Culver, 2005). In addition, there was a higher proportion of students who scored “3” on the 2005 assessment than in the previous year. Once again the three goals had been met.

In 2006 the scores dipped on all of the assessments. This year, 86.5% of students met the inferential skill goal, 88.9% met the literal skill goal, and 66% met the writing goal (Culver, 2006). However, the difference of less than two percent in the reading scores is not statistically significant. The writing scores were more of a concern. The majority of students still scored a “2” or better on the written assessment, but it did not meet the additional expectation the FLES teachers had that the percentage of students in that category would be maintained or increased.

For all three years, the data showed there is a statistically significant difference (p<0.01) between the performance of males and females on the writing assessment (Culver, 2006). More females received a score of “3” than expected and fewer than predicted received a score of “1”. Conversely, a greater number than expected of males received a score of “1” and fewer than anticipated received a score of “3”.

For the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 writing assessments there has been a statistically significant difference in scores among students of different races. However, there has been no consistent trend in the differences across the years, and different racial groups out-perform others each year (Culver, 2006).

Conclusions

Even though all three goals were met in the first year, the teachers believed that the targeted skills could be improved by incorporating more reading and writing into the curriculum, ultimately increasing the number of students that perform at the goal level. The FLES teachers examined both the fifth grade and sixth grade curricula. They decided to begin reading letters in the fifth grade units on descriptions and family and continue it in the sixth grade Central and South America units. To work on letter writing, most FLES classes exchanged pen pal letters with secondary Spanish students throughout the year.

After the second year of assessments, one of the FLES teachers suggested that the writing assessment be administered in the fall as a pretest to familiarize the students with the test format. In the spring the students could compare their fall and spring assessments to see the growth they had made through the year. The staff implemented this procedure beginning with the 2005-2006 school year. Students enjoyed seeing their progress and took more ownership of their score. In the fall they found out what they would need to do to improve their score by the spring. New staff was able to see how they would assess writing skills and areas for more work with their students. The teachers saw the importance of providing multiple opportunities in class for writing practice.

In the fall of 2006 the staff examined the results of the third year of assessment, including the decrease in number of students performing at the predetermined levels. The teachers explored ways to incorporate more writing practice across the entire curriculum to provide the students with more opportunities to develop their writing skills. They are also investigating methods to reach the male students more effectively and improve their skills, while maintaining the female students’ scores.

Based on three years of data, the staff believes it would be a good time to make changes in the assessments. Dr. Vincent Granville, Ph.D. statistics, has suggested that we can significantly increase the quality of the data collected from our reading assessment if ten questions with five choices are offered. The staff has already begun discussions on how to improve the rubric for the writing assessment.

The FLES teachers have shared the assessment data and examples of student products with their administrators and secondary teachers. This gives them a good idea of what the students exiting the FLES program are able to produce in written format and how well they are able to comprehend a text written entirely in Spanish.

The yearly assessments allow the teachers to evaluate the reading and writing skills of their students effectively. The data analysis and review spark meaningful conversations that enhance instruction. The inclusion of these improvements throughout the FLES curriculum helps create a dynamic program that adapts to changing student needs and advances competence in using the language.
NNELL State Representatives

2006 Summer Institute at the National Foreign Language Resource Center

Ana Lomba

State and Regional Representatives attended the annual NNELL Summer Institute at the National K-12 Foreign Language Resource Center at Iowa State University July 14-17. The purpose of the institute is to participate in professional development opportunities geared for early language educators and to promote best practices in early language learning. In addition to the workshops on instructional design and teaching strategies that are highlighted below, the institute provided a wonderful opportunity for sharing and networking.

Tools for Thematic Planning — Dr. Carol Ann Dahlberg.

Carol Ann Dahlberg, renowned co-author of Languages and Children: Making the Match, arrived wearing a mechanic’s cap and carrying a toolbox. She then proceeded to share eclectic teaching tools, strategies, techniques and methods that every world language teacher should have in their own toolbox of teaching strategies. She also focused on the use of the story form to engage students in meaningful learning and modeled many powerful examples.

Culture as Curriculum, Weaving Culture into Instruction — Paris Granville

Paris Granville, Editor of Learning Languages, began her workshop by providing participants Polynesian costumes to perform an authentic dance. She showed the group how to use engaging performance assessments, student film, impromptu conversations and simulations to integrate culture into language acquisition.

Sponsors

A special thanks to the National K-12 Foreign Language Resource Center at Iowa State University, and to its Director, Dr. Marcia Rosenbusch, for organizing and co-sponsoring the institute along with Santillana USA, Wright Group/McGraw-Hill and EMC Publishing Company. Santillana also sponsored a workshop on “The Impact of Classroom Socio-Cultural Dynamics”, and Wright Group/McGraw Hill on “No Child Left Behind: How to Strengthen Academic Skills Through Content-Related FLES Instruction”
Assessment Resources

Solutions from CAL for Assessing Young Language Learners

Increasingly, K–8 foreign language programs are assessing students' language proficiency. Programs want to demonstrate the accomplishments of their students and fit into the accountability framework that schools and states are adopting under "No Child Left Behind." Additional reasons for assessing students' foreign language proficiency often relate to program evaluation. Establishing that students are making progress in acquiring a second language serves to document the effectiveness of the program.

Since the 1980s, the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) has been helping elementary and middle school foreign language programs evaluate students' second language proficiency. CAL has developed a range of performance-based assessment instruments and provided training on their implementation, conducted foreign language program evaluations, published two annotated bibliographies of K–8 foreign language assessment instruments, and created an online Directory of K–12 Foreign Language Assessment Instruments and Resources (www.cal.org/resources).

COPE

Initially, in 1989, CAL focused on the performance of 5th and 6th grade immersion students in a national study of foreign language proficiency and attitudes towards Spanish language and culture. Following this, the CAL Oral Proficiency Examination (COPE) was designed for students to demonstrate second language proficiency through role-playing situations typically encountered at an immersion school. Student performance is evaluated by the COPE rating scale, which is based on the nine-level ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (1986). Validated in 1989, the COPE has been used in numerous immersion programs across the United States.

SOPA and FLES SOPA

The COPE was followed by the Student Oral Proficiency Assessment (SOPA, 1991). Developed to assess the oral language proficiency of immersion students in Grades 1–4, the SOPA consists of five developmentally appropriate language tasks: identifying and naming, answering personal questions, describing a process, retelling a story, and supporting an opinion. In 1996, CAL was asked to develop a SOPA for students in non-immersion foreign language programs. Along with two tasks from the original SOPA—identifying and naming and answering personal questions—the nonimmersion or FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary School) SOPA includes two tasks that are more appropriate for students receiving less intensive foreign language instruction: describing and placing objects and people in a familiar scene, and following instructions.

ELLOPA

Requests for an assessment designed specifically for younger learners led CAL in 2001, to develop the Early Language Listening and Oral Proficiency Assessment (ELLOPA). Known also as Cow Talk, the assessment uses a puppet, Mrs. Cow, to guide students through a series of hands-on games, which utilize manipulatives, familiar objects and situations, and culturally related materials. Piloted and validated in 2002, the ELLOPA assesses students in Grades K–3 in immersion and non-immersion foreign language programs across the country. The ELLOPA rating profile is based on the COPE and SOPA scales and incorporates language and concepts from ACTFL's Performance Guidelines for K–12 Learners (1998) and Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century (1996).

As well as developing performance-based assessment instruments, CAL works hand-in-hand with programs to effectively assess students' language proficiency. In a typical program evaluation, CAL's assessment specialists work with schools to customize the assessment instruments to the specific content and objectives of the program's curriculum. CAL administers the assessments or provides training to the teachers who will conduct the assessments. Lastly, CAL specialists oversee the rating of the assessments and the interpretation and reporting of results. CAL specializes in tailoring foreign language services to match the particular needs and resources of each school or school district. CAL's School Services staff and consultants develop questionnaires for students, parents, and teachers; create classroom-based assessments, such as student self-assessment instruments and teacher observation rubrics; conduct site visits; evaluate curricula; analyze assessment data; and write program evaluation reports.

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FALL 2006 • VOLUME XI • NUMBER 1 • Learning Languages 37
Opportunities

Visit NNELL.org

Log on to www.NNELL.org for resources design just for our members. You will find the Home/Parent Connection, Newsworthy items, as well as, print and web resources. Contact information for the NNELL board, Regional and State Representatives is available. Find colleagues around the nation with the members-only directory search. Members can also download photos and templates that accompany each issue of Learning Languages. There are also job postings listed by city and state.

Conference on Research into Teaching Modern Languages to Young Learners

The Council of Europe European Centre for Modern Languages and the University of Pécs, Hungary is sponsoring the Teaching Modern Languages to Young Learners (TeMoLaYoLe) conference on February 1-3, 2007. The conference aims to generate new ideas and share research into TeMoLaYoLe: the teaching of modern languages to young learners, the processes and outcomes in young learners' classrooms, the teaching and learning of modern foreign and minority languages, innovative approaches in teacher education and language curriculum. The event will also provide an opportunity for networking for both established and novice professionals. The organizers invite teacher educators, teachers, researchers, and all interested professionals in the field to submit proposals for round tables, papers and posters in English and other widely spoken languages. Visit conference website at www.pte.hu/temolayole/ or send an e-mail to nikolov@nostromo.pte.hu to find out more.
A Response to the National Security Language Initiative

J. David Edwards, Ph.D.
JNCL-NCLIS Executive Director

The Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL/NCLIS) are composed of sixty-four member organizations representing approximately 200,000 language educators and professionals. JNCL/NCLIS members deal with the languages taught, studied and used in the United States including the commonly taught and less-commonly taught languages, English to Speakers of Other Languages, American Sign Language, the classics and bilingual education. Our member organizations are involved across all educational levels (Pre-K to adult learners) and are engaged in teaching, research, translation and interpretation, distance learning/computer-assisted instruction, materials development, assessment, student and faculty exchanges, and study abroad, among other areas.

JNCL/NCLIS applauds the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) and the President’s efforts to increase language capability in our country. NSLI is an encouraging beginning for establishing a broad, meaningful language policy to put the U.S. on equal footing with other nations. This Initiative enhances our national security, economic competitiveness, international understanding, and educational excellence. JNCL/NCLIS and our members stand ready to support and assist in the implementation of the policies and efforts of the NSLI. We look forward to working with the Administration and Congress to create, shape and implement programs that will make NSLI and future endeavors in language education successful. In this regard, we would note that the success of NSLI will depend upon all those involved agreeing on a few guiding principles.

- **The Place of Language Education:** While NSLI focuses on languages currently critical for national security, there is a critical need for all languages. Strong language skills are needed domestically, as well as for interacting with the rest of the world in commerce, diplomacy and peacekeeping, and scientific and cultural exchange. A quality, world-class education requires that foreign languages be a core academic subject for all students, offering varied instructional models with multiple entry points throughout the curricular sequence. Learning foreign languages prepares students for global understanding and living in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual world. Study of and through another language provides essential communication skills, and enhances learning through improved cognitive development, transferable reading skills, reinforcement of other subject areas, cultural literacy and sensitivity, and tolerance for diversity.

- **The Need for Lengthy Learning Sequences:** Acquiring a superior level of language competence (i.e., an ILR rating of 3 or higher) needed for our national competitiveness requires long sequences of study. Beginning language study early and continuing such study in extended instructional sequences with established and commonly agreed upon benchmarks provides one of the best opportunities for students to achieve proficiency, and also enhances potential success in acquiring additional languages. It is never too early or too late to begin a properly-sequenced course of language study.

- **The Need for Qualified Teachers:** Languages must be taught by teachers who are not only fluent in the language but also pedagogically qualified. The teacher shortage in all languages must be addressed in a proactive manner. To create a cadre of high quality teachers in both commonly and less-commonly taught languages requires a solid infrastructure for professional preparation, major incentives in teacher recruitment, and ongoing professional development. The development of innovative teacher training and certification programs is particularly crucial for teacher development in the less-commonly taught languages.

- **Language Study and Cultural Immersion Abroad:** Study abroad and educational exchanges are highly valuable cultural experiences, and opportunities for such study should be available to every student, teacher and administrator. As a setting for language acquisition, study abroad is most effective when offered in a context that provides pre- and post-travel language study.

- **Support for Heritage Speakers:** Heritage language speakers should be provided the opportunity to develop high levels of competence in their native languages as well as in English. With their existing proficiency in languages other than English, heritage language communities in the U.S. offer a rich source of candidates for programs leading to superior levels of language ability in both languages. Study of all heritage languages, critical and otherwise, offers invaluable language learning experience and cultural insight.
MISSION

To improve the nation's capacity for teaching and learning languages at all levels by building a strong foundation in elementary and secondary schools.

INITIATIVES

For Early Language Learning:

Provide Ŋandutí and NNELL Websites and Ŋandú listserv;

Collaborate in partnership to develop online assessment of listening, speaking, reading, writing.

For Mandarin Chinese FLES and Two-Way Spanish Immersion:

Provide teacher training on instructional strategies;

Develop curriculum, instructional materials, and language scope and sequence;

Conduct longitudinal research of student progress in language proficiency, student progress in academic subjects, and student attitudes toward other cultures and languages.
Learning Languages

Submission Guidelines

Learning Languages, the journal of the National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL), serves the profession by providing a medium for the sharing of information, ideas, and concerns among teachers, administrators, researchers, and others interested in the early learning of World languages. Learning Languages embodies NNELL's commitment to promote opportunities for all children to develop a high level of competence in at least one language and culture in addition to their own.

In an effort to address the interests of the profession, Learning Languages publishes both scholarly articles and invited features. Both types of submission must demonstrate the author(s)'s awareness of language learning theories and early-language learning classroom practices.

Scholarly Articles (2,000-5,000 words)

Scholarly articles are evaluated by at least three members of the board of reviewers through a process of blind review. Reviewers evaluate these articles on the basis of content, originality, information accuracy, clarity, and contribution to the field. These articles are clearly identified as Refereed Article in the journal.

Scholarly articles report on original inquiry and cite current and relevant research and theory as a basis for making recommendations for practice. Scholarly articles in the areas listed below will be given equal consideration:

- **Advocacy and Leadership** (e.g., analysis of national trends or policies, effective leadership and advocacy models, etc.)
- **Practical** (e.g., exemplary implementation of an early language learning program model, innovative approaches to teaching, etc.)
- **Research** (e.g., quantitative or qualitative studies that have direct implications to early language learning, etc.)
- **Theoretical** (e.g., guidelines for practical application anchored in the literature, etc.)

**Features (1,000-3,000 words)**

Features are evaluated by at least two readers, one of which is a member of the NNELL Executive Board, and the editor. Features address subjects of appeal to early language teachers, administrators, researchers, and others interested in the early learning of World languages. They may include teacher-to-teacher advice on issues affecting the profession, descriptions of successful advocacy initiatives, or selected invited contributions on topics of interest to the profession.

**Activities (800—1,500 words)**

Descriptions of successful language learning activities are expected to provide the following: a) language learning goals; b) applicable standards; c) materials; d) a description of the procedures, and e) assessment plan. Please keep in mind the diversity of languages represented in our readership in your examples and illustrations.

**Student Work**

Authors are encouraged to include student work with their submissions. However, written permission from the student(s)'s parents or legal guardians must be sent to the editor before any student work can be published. Permission from the parent or legal guardian must include the student's name, age, school, and the teacher's name, address, telephone, and e-mail address (if available).

**General Guidelines**

To be considered for publication, all manuscripts must be accompanied by written notification from the author(s) containing:
1) a statement indicating that the manuscript is not being considered for publication elsewhere either in print or online; 2) contact address for all authors; and 3) clear designation of a contact author. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information provided and compliance with copyright laws (for information about copyright, visit www.copyright.gov). Style and formatting should follow the American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines. In the case of multiple authors, one author should be designated as the contact author. The contact author is responsible for keeping co-authors informed of the status of a submission.

All submissions (snail or electronic mail) must include the word processing file of the manuscript in document format (.doc) or rich-text format (.rtf). You may insert graphics in your word processing file to indicate location, but all graphics should also be supplied as separate files using a standard format (preferably .tif, .bmp, or high resolution .jpg). Use APA guidelines to indicate placement of graphics in the body of the manuscript.

**Electronic Submission**

Create a new e-mail message addressed to LearningLanguages@gmail.com. In the body of the message, type in or paste the information in the cover letter. Attach all corresponding files and send your message.

**Regular Mail Submission**

Enclose one hard copy of your manuscript, a cover letter, and electronic file(s) saved in portable media (e.g., a CD) in an envelope and mail it to the editor (see address below).

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All manuscripts, and questions about manuscripts, may be directed to the Editor at LearningLanguages@gmail.com or Paris Granville, 2428 35th Ave NE, Issaquah, WA 98029

Websites

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- **2006-2007 Full-time Student Academic Year Membership.** Students must submit a photocopy of a valid student ID with their advisor’s signature. US Residents $15.00 (Non-US Residents $25.00)
- **2006-2007 Retiree** $15.00

Payment may be made by check or money order (payable to NNELL). No purchase orders please.

Name: ____________________________
Preferred Mailing Address: ____________________________
City: __________________ State: _______ Zip Code: _______

Check whether this address is:  
☐ Home  ☐ School

Title or Grade Level: ____________________________
School or Affiliation: ____________________________
Telephone: ___________________ Day: _______ Evening: _______
Email (Please include to receive E-Notes): ____________________________
☐ Renewal  ☐ New Member

☐ Check if you are a World Languages Other than English National Board Certified Teacher (Year Received: _____________)

List My Contact Information in the NNELL Directory?  
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Mail this form and your check (or money order) to Dr. Mary Lynn Redmond at the address below.

Dr. Mary Lynn Redmond, Executive Secretary  
National Network for Early Language Learning  
P.O. Box 7266 / A2A Tribble Hall  
Wake Forest University  
Winston-Salem, NC 27109

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED