Meeting 05 • 12 April 2011

Version:
4/11/11

Today • my deadline page

numbers in ( ) = minutes planned for activity/ topic
√ = topic / activity that was adequately dealt with during the class
+ = topic needs more attention & will be resumed at next / subsequent meeting(s)
- = a topic / activity that was proposed but not carried out (but will be taken up later)
N = a topic / activity that was proposed but not included / is not going to be taken up after all
Red italic text like this = comments after the meeting

[handwritten right margin: measure →, judge, US citizen test, 10X Orals]

	Main topic(s): Introduction to Assessment; the FL and AL Cultures
	(5) Review of previous meeting: main points; thoughts in the meantime?
	(5) (possibility a regular feature:) assessment in the news! Recent external assessment of WLL Department released last week!
	(30) The OPI - structure, examiner stance, question types. Sample audits (media clips); notes about the French "Chris" interview (0269). Supplementary resources (some pages may overlap): Level check cards, the "Desperate 10", and some role-play situations (0344); more role-play situations (0261); checklist for good interview technique, topic suggestions (0266)
	(30) Let's try a pseudo-OPI! Why not experiment on me? Or can I demonstrate on someone's German?
	(10) Start Assignment 2 (evaluate your own speaking proficiency), due 14 April. Preview Assignment #3 (Pseudo-OPI)
	(10) backgrounds and professional interests of instructor; embarrassing example of one of his old tests (0347), for which he pleads the excuses of youth and lack of training
	(10) Announcements, wrap-up: 14 April ePortfolio Workshop; WBF schedule - IAC 19 April, 3:30-5:00, SMSU 258; need to acquire Stevens, *Rubrics*; debriefing and summation review Assignment 1 reflections?

Upcoming class meetings

12 & 14 April: structure of OPI; role-play situations; writing up the evaluation; validity, realiability, accuracy, previsions; maybe introduction to rubrics

19 & 21 April: more about OPI; the next topic (weeks 4 & 5) is rubrics; after that: probably testing in other modalities (writing, listening, reading, culture)

Upcoming assignment(s)

This section offers a PREVIEW, not activated assignments. Assignments are made, with announcement of their deadlines, both in class and on the "schedule" page. Deadlines are also posted on the general "Assignments & Deadlines" page that is linked from my homepage (and here).

Announcements

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Misc.

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top of page

Perspective

Envisioning the Big Picture of Program Design

Eileen Glisan
ACTFL President

The theme connecting my messages in *The Language Educator* this year has been the notion of "big ideas" (as defined by Wiggins and McTighe, 2005) and the need to keep our primary focus on the "big" communicative contexts as we plan units of instruction and assessments. However, the effectiveness of thematic units created within these communicative contexts will depend on how these units connect to the larger curriculum or program. The beginning of a new academic year provides an excellent opportunity to revisit the goals we have established for our language programs. What are our programmatic goals and how are they reflected in our planning of units or lessons? Are all of our lessons and units linked to programmatic big ideas and overarching communicative contexts?

Planning at the macro level mirrors unit and lesson design inasmuch as it begins with the identification of (1) the desired end results or outcomes of the program or course and (2) the acceptable evidence obtained through summative performance-based assessment. However, programmatic planning can be challenging since it requires consensus building with colleagues, many of whom may be accustomed to the traditional process of identifying the *content* to be covered in the curriculum, often determined by the textbook or by what has been taught in previous years.

A question that might be used to prompt a discussion about program planning with our colleagues is: Why engage in backward design at the programmatic level? Like other professionals such as engineers and physicians, educators are client-centered. In language education, we must be mindful of our clients (i.e., students), who seek evidence that they have accomplished specific outcomes as a result of their efforts in our programs or courses. Thus, students should acquire knowledge and skills in order to perform key tasks important in the world beyond the classroom—not for the sake of learning content in a vacuum. We have seen in our advocacy efforts that a general public who does not see performance-based results of our programs will have little respect and support for language education.

As we explore backward design planning at the macro level, we could begin our consensus building with the following questions:

- **What are the desired end results of our language programs?** That is, what do we want our students to understand and be able to do by the time they complete the program? The desired end results for foreign language programs and courses might focus on the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*, proficiency levels, and/or real-world applications or skills. Regardless of the specific focus, the desired results should reflect big ideas and questions that promote inquiry and exploration of topics in depth and should be transferable to new contexts.
- **What summative performance-based assessment(s) do we conduct and what evidence do we accept to confirm that students have achieved the desired results?** Examples are final oral interviews or role-plays, a multimedia culture project, or a presentation of a final portfolio. Performance tasks and rubrics result in robust evidence of whether or not the desired results have been attained.
- **How is our students' progress assessed along the way to ensure that they are on track to meet the program's goals? What are the benchmark points at which feedback is provided to students?** For example, in a K–12 program, standards-based benchmarks might occur at the end of grades 4, 8, and 12.
- **How are assessment results and feedback from students used to improve instruction and shape the curriculum?**
- **Is the program "spiraled" so that students have opportunities to explore big ideas and issues in increasing depth and breadth?** Students often perceive that they are forced to begin language study anew again each year rather than continuing where they left off at the previous level. Do we have the type of articulation across program levels to ensure that learners do not "start over again" each year?

We can all take the opportunity, as we embark on a new academic year, to step back and examine the big picture of our language programs. You may also wish to take advantage of some of ACTFL's resources for assistance (see the "Publications" links on the ACTFL website at *www.actfl.org*). Good luck in September and please remember to share your experiences with your colleagues in the ACTFL Online Community!

Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005, 2nd ed.). *Understanding by design.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Continue the Conversation

Join us in the ACTFL Online Community at *community. actfl.org* to discuss the ideas presented by Dr. Glisan in this and her other 2010 editorials in the magazine. We welcome your thoughts and hope to provide a forum where we can discuss "big ideas" in the language classroom!