

Meeting 07 • 19 April 2011

Version:
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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

	Main topic(s): Introduction to Assessment; the FL and AL Cultures
(5)	Review of previous meeting: main points; thoughts in the meantime?
(5)	(possibly a regular feature:) assessment (or language learning or just education) in the news! Oregon may close 30 schools. Or else (just for today): First 15-30 minutes: Group discussion without me - I'll be at an IAC (Institutional Assessment Council) meeting that starts at 3:30 pm in SMSU 258 (you are welcome to attend). Suggested topic: validity and reliability of the OPI
(30)	More about OPI technique: role-play situations; advantageous prompts for the IH/AL level. Comment about the French interview of me on 14 April: not enough prompting for description of people and things (think: family, personal life, everyday environments and activities). 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)
(20)	Formal activation of Assignment 3
(20)	"Backwash": implementing oral testing in language programs; some references: 0054 My 1984 article in <i>Unterrichtspraxis</i> ; 0391 Swender, "Oral Proficiency Testing in the Real World" (2003, abstract); 0651 Laplan & Sinclair, "Oral Proficiency Testing and the Language Curriculum: Two Experiments in Curricular Design for Conversation Courses" (1984, abstract)
(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
(20)	Maybe: validity and reliability of the OPI. Maybe: a trial

MONDAY, APRIL 18, 2011

30 schools in Oregon could shut in 2 years

Districts consider closures and consolidation versus cutting programs such as academic clubs and sports

By NICOLE DUNGCA
THE OREGONIAN

When Joel Sebastian heard that the Eugene School District planned to close four schools this year, the Canby middle school principal felt sure his own district would never have to consider such a proposal.

"It's almost as if you were reading a story about a crime in your neighborhood," Sebastian said. "Even if it happened a block away, you never think it's going to happen to your house."

But just last week Sebastian found himself supporting a similar idea, closing his own school, Ackerman, to avoid additional staff reductions.

Oregon school districts could shut down more than 30 schools over the next two years as educators brace themselves for a slow-going recovery from the recession. Even districts that previously considered the closing of neighborhood schools as too disruptive to contemplate now see that as a better choice than the continued loss of academic, club and sports programs.

"It's an option of last resort."

Perspective

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Eileen Glisan
ACTFL President

Envisioning the Big Picture of Program Design

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!

*from German for the Learner-Centered Classroom
Judith Bellings Olympia, WA 1991*

1.3 Do's and Don'ts of Proficiency-Oriented Lesson Planning

Do conduct classes in German and design activities that encourage students to speak German in class.

Do use a variety of materials in the instructional program.

Do teach grammar only as a tool for using German to communicate.

Do integrate information on culture into German instruction at all levels and provide a balanced picture of the countries where German is spoken.

Do provide a coherent theme or topic with clearly stated goals for each lesson.

Do include listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities in each unit of study.

Do use a variety of teaching techniques.

Do devise a lesson-planning format to ensure that the best possible learning environment is always provided.

Do plan lessons that require students to use German to express their own thoughts and ideas.

Do get students talking in German about their own lives, interests, and environment.

Do plan activities that require extended discourse.

Do teach words in complete contexts and in relation to meaningful life situations.

Do test what is taught; that is, provide tests, checks, and quizzes on the four skill areas—listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Don't constantly fall back into English; discourage students from using English to communicate in class.

Don't rely solely on the textbook as a teaching resource.

Don't base lessons on coverage of grammar points that have no communicative purpose.

Don't treat cultural topics as isolated extras, or overemphasize out-of-date stereotypes of German countries and German people.

Don't fill a lesson with miscellaneous, unrelated activities.

Don't fixate on one teaching style that neglects any of the basic skill areas.

Don't fall into a repetitive, predictable pattern of instructional procedures.

Don't rely solely on the textbook as the organizing basis for lessons.

Don't rely too heavily on mechanical drills in which students repeat and manipulate grammatical forms they have learned.

Don't limit the content of the German program to abstract data and impersonal facts.

Don't focus exclusively on exercises that produce one-word or one-sentence responses.

Don't teach words or sentences in isolation.

Don't grade students using only written tests or examinations based on multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank items.

Presenter _____

Scorer _____

Date _____

Total Score _____

Grade _____

Scoring Guide for a Quasi-OPI with Recorded Sound and Written Evaluation

Rule of thumb for 4/satisfactory: The project evaluator who is competent in the target language can confirm the sufficiency of the sample and the accuracy of the examiner's rating to ACTFL sub-level reliability using either the written evaluation or the recorded interview, or a combination of evidence from the two, though there are some problems that have to do with sound fidelity, language sampling in limited areas, inefficient interviewing, and/or description of the subject's performance.

Note: Factors 1 & 2 have a "gateway" or "filter" function. If the sound quality of the interview is unacceptable, the evaluator cannot proceed to evaluate the rest of the project independently of the written documentation. If the sound quality is satisfactory, but the sample is not adequate, it is impossible for the interviewer to produce an accurate rating or the evaluator of the quasi-OPI to judge the rest of the project. If that is the case, the project should be redone. The better way to judge adequacy of the sample is to have a satisfactory sound recording, although excellent documentation could offset poor sound quality. A truly exemplary project must have excellent sound, along with exemplary strength in the other indicators of quality, because that is the mark of a project that can be used for years as an example to other language teachers as they are being trained.

	Factor 1 Sound quality	Factor 2 Adequacy of the sample	Factor 3 Efficiency of the interview	Factor 5 written documentation of the rating
6		Nothing significant missing, no significant redundancies.	The interview is conducted without wasted words or time.	The rating is correct to the exact sub-level. Text type, function, context and accuracy appear in that order. 10 separate examples are cited, they cover what the interviewee can do and can NOT do, and clearly distinguish the "plateau" from "peaks" and "valleys."
5		The sample has several redundancies.	Almost 6	As above, except for either: error of one sub-level in rating OR slight weakness in documentation
4		Most chief features of the level are checked, and most of these more than once; text type is clearly demonstrated; question types, functions and contexts are consistently suitable.	There are a few excessive or pointless prompts. The interview is no more than 150% as long as it could have been	Error of one sub-level in rating AND slight weakness in documentation.
3	For 3-6, add factors from list below	A few missing features that can plausibly be established by inference, for example if the examiner/auditor know the learner or the program.	Almost 3	Almost 3
2	Auditor experiences slight hindrances due to poor sound.		The interview is much too long and contains several clearly excessive or pointless prompts.	Rating is off by more than one ACTFL sub-level, in either direction OR the documentation is wrongly structured and evidence is weak
1	High-level speaker of the language must listen several times to catch even simple words.			Rating is off by more than one ACTFL sub-level, in either direction AND the documentation is wrongly structured and evidence is weak

4 sound quality factors to add on to the basic level of 2 on the grid: volume strong enough for clearly audible replay at mid-volume on a boombox for a group of 10 in a quiet seminar room; no recurrent odd background noise; interviewEE's voice is miked louder than that of interviewer; the two voices are clearly different in pitch, timbre, etc.