

# Proficiency-Oriented Language Instruction and Assessment:

## Standards, Philosophies, and Considerations for Assessment

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### New Standards for Language Education

“The essence of second language education is embodied in its attempt to join individuals together so that they might communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries” (Tedick et al., 1993, p. 44). Never before has the need for such communication been greater. For students in the U.S., the need to function competently in more than one language has become increasingly important in this rapidly shrinking, interdependent world of the 21st century. It has become crucial to prepare students with second language competence—being able to talk about language, to describe its grammar, and to conjugate verbs will simply not suffice. In this new century, students must be able to communicate orally and in writing and to comprehend both oral and written language. They must be able to participate in culturally appropriate ways in face-to-face interaction with members of other cultures, and they must also be able to interpret the concepts, ideas, and opinions expressed by members of these cultures through their media and literatures (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996, p. 35).

It is indeed an exciting time to be involved in language education. The national standards for Foreign Language Learning, unveiled in early 1996, describe a challenging yet stimulating vision for language education in the 21st century, a vision that recognizes the need for language instruction to facilitate genuine interaction between and among individuals who represent different cultural and linguistic communities (National Standards for Foreign Language Education Project, 1996). This is a vision that the Articulation Project shares, so for this reason, we made the decision to adopt the national standards for the Curriculum Handbook. A synopsis of the standards appears in the Key Materials section.<sup>1</sup> Most states have created state standards for world languages that parallel or incorporate the national standards. The message across the nation is clear. It calls for language education to focus on what students should know and be able to do; the emphasis is on language use and culture is seen as central to acquiring language for real communicative purposes. The national standards represent broad, long-term goals for language instruction. They are intended to be interpreted broadly, and we have done so within the context of the tasks and units in this Handbook.

Despite emphasis through the 1980's and 90's on proficiency-oriented language instruction for foreign language classrooms and, in the late 90's the national standards, grammar has maintained its role as the key organizing principle of language instruction in the vast majority of language classrooms. In most language classrooms, language is viewed as “object”—something that is acted upon, an entity to be scrutinized, analyzed, and broken down into its smallest components (Tedick et al., 1993; Tedick & Walker, 1994). This view has emerged in part due to the historical influence that the field of linguistics has had in the field of language education and also in part because of the long road language teachers have had to travel in order to legitimize their place in the arena of U.S. schools. The “content” of language curriculum has been defined as the lexicon, syntax, morphology, and phonology of language, or as the notions and functions. In order to emphasize the communicative nature of language and to acknowledge that language has meaning when it is embedded within a social context, it is necessary to view language as

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“subject” (something that acts) (Tedick et al., 1993; Tedick & Walker, 1994) and to strive for a balance between language-as-object and language-as-subject in curriculum and instruction. Balancing the two perspectives means that students are engaged in learning about language—its vocabulary, its grammar and morphology, its phonology (that is, engaging with language as *object*), yet always within the context of using language to communicate meaning (that is, engaging with language as *subject*). In other words, it’s important for a teacher to teach language rules (e.g., verb conjugations), but it’s also important always to follow that instruction with application of the rules. How well can students use conjugate verbs correctly to write a letter? In a nutshell, not only do students need to know how language works, they also need to know how to use language for meaningful purposes and the opportunities to practice these applications.

In order to strive for a balance between language-as-object and language-as-subject and to emphasize language use with culture as core in the language classroom, a rethinking of curriculum and instruction needs to occur. Traditionally, most foreign language classrooms have concentrated on *how* (grammar) to say *what* (vocabulary), but have left the *why*, *whom*, *where*, and *when* out of the equation (National Standards for Foreign Language Education Project, 1996; Tedick & Walker, 1994). While grammar and vocabulary remain important components, the others, which highlight the sociolinguistic and cultural aspects of language, are essential for communication. “In other words, grammar and structure are not the goal of instruction, but rather essential tools toward achieving other, more important goals—language use in social contexts and intercultural communication” (Tedick & Walker, 1994, p. 306). One way to achieve these more important goals is to make content and cultural themes the organizing principle for language curriculum and instruction. This rethinking of the curriculum, toward content-based, task-based language instruction and an emphasis on meaningful language use is the focus of the national standards and efforts of the Curriculum Team of the Articulation Project.

The focus on meaning and language use does not argue that teachers should be neglecting form. On the contrary, what’s necessary is a balance between meaning and form in the context of communication. In a way, this language instruction issue is similar to an issue that has dominated the field of literacy instruction for some time. For decades there has been a debate about literacy instruction that has centered on whole language vs. phonics instruction. The question has too often been: Should teachers focus on the whole or the parts? The answer is “neither,” because the question is wrong—it is simply not an “either/or” issue. Good teachers know that effective literacy instruction provides a balance between the whole and the parts. Children who are learning how to read need to be surrounded by a rich literacy environment that involves frequent interaction with stimulating

texts; at the same time, they need to know how language “works.” In other words, they need to understand the language system—how the parts work together to make up the whole. The more contextualized the instruction of the parts, the better students understand their relationship to the whole. A complete treatment of the whole language vs. phonics debate is far beyond the scope of this introduction. We include the analogy here to help language teachers understand that *in order for students to achieve high levels of proficiency in a language, there needs to be a balance between language and language use*. In order to understand further how to strive toward such a balance in the language classroom, it is important for teachers to consider the key philosophical principles that have driven the development of the *Handbook*.

## The Philosophical Principles: POLIA and CAPRII

The philosophical principles that guided the Articulation Project were established early on as work on the Project began. A statement describing principles of proficiency-oriented language instruction and assessment (POLIA) was developed by Arons et al. (1994) and contributed to the curriculum team’s philosophical principles (see POLIA statement and principles in the Key Materials section).

The philosophical principles described in the POLIA statement are further supported by six key concepts that we believe should guide language education: (1) *Contextualization* of language instruction, (2) *Authenticity* of task and text, (3) an emphasis on *Process*, (4) the value of *Reflection* for both language learners and language teachers, (5) an emphasis on *Interaction* within and beyond the classroom, and (6) *Integration* of the four modalities and of language and content, be it related to other academic disciplines or cultural themes. While these six concepts—referred to by the acronym CAPRII—are and indeed should be understood as interrelated and inseparable in effective language teaching, they can each be considered in turn (Tedick, 1996; Tedick & Tischer, 1996).<sup>2</sup> Figure 1 provides a brief summary of the concepts that make up CAPRII.

# Figure 1: CAPRII

**C**ontextualization involves *meaningful* language use for *real* communicative purposes; lessons that are presented in context enhance meaning; contextualized teaching recognizes that meaning changes depending upon the context in which it occurs.

**A**uthenticity of Text and Task—authentic texts and tasks reflect the intention of a real communicative purpose for a real audience.

**P**rocess—language acquisition (be it first, second, or third...) is an ongoing process that requires a great deal of time, patience, thought, effort, and encouragement. Recognition of the nature of this process needs to guide instruction and assessment.

**R**eflection—both teachers and students need time for deliberate thought, or reflection.

**I**nteraction—learners must *use* language in meaningful interaction in order to learn it.

**I**ntegration—an integrative approach to language teaching sees the connection of languages and cultures to what we do, how we think, and who we are.

of the four modalities—creating classroom activities that require students to use language within two or more of the four modalities, with attention to how those modalities work within the framework of communicative modes, helps to reinforce the concepts being emphasized.

of language and content—language must be integrated with content, be it other academic subject matters or cultural themes. A content-based approach to language teaching emphasizes language use; language structures are emphasized in the context of that use. Language classrooms must become places where students and teachers understand themselves as cultural beings and begin to discover the complexity of the concept of culture as they view cultures both within and outside of the U.S. from a number of perspectives.

## Contextualization

According to Shrum and Glisan (1994):

Language that is introduced and taught in context presents real situations that encompass the physical setting, the purpose of the exchange, the roles of the participants, and the socially acceptable norms of interaction, in addition to the medium, topic, tone, and register of the exchange (Hymes, 1974). Grammatical structures that might otherwise be devoid of context become an integral part of the communicative acts that occur in contexts (p. 23).

*Contextualized teaching recognizes that meaning changes depending upon the context in which it occurs.* When we begin to think about teaching language for communication rather than as a system of grammatical forms, we see that grammatical categories do not necessarily correspond to communicative functions and that grammar alone cannot determine meaning. In other words, context (the topic and situation) plays a major role in establishing meaning. For example, one might assume that the imperative mood as a grammatical category always indicates the act of commanding. Widdowson (1978, in Lyster, 1990, p. 162) provides examples illustrating how context, not grammatical function, determines meaning:

“Bake the pie in a slow oven” is an instruction, not a command.

“Come for dinner tomorrow” is an invitation, not a command.

“Forgive us our trespasses” is a prayer, not a command.

Context refers to the topic and situation of a communicative act that are necessary for understanding (Walz, 1989). Walz (1989) points out that a number of language textbooks provide contextualized grammar exercises. These exercises provide thematically related sentences requiring mechanical manipulation of a grammatical form, but often do not force students to understand. Therefore, contextualization of mechanical drills in this sense is certainly not the same thing as creating a context (Walz, 1989, p. 162). Contextualization as it is interpreted in this *Handbook* involves meaningful language use for real communicative purposes and helps students to understand how meaning is constructed by language users (be they writing, speaking, reading, or listening) depending upon context.

Many of the tasks found in the *Handbook* are contextualized in that they provide a topic and situation in which students need to use language with one another for some meaningful purpose. For example,

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in the task entitled “Senegal by Numbers,” students learn about Senegalese demographics through an information-gap activity. The task gives students an opportunity to practice understanding and communicating complex numbers in the context of Senegalese demographics. In other words, the topic (Senegalese demographics) *contextualizes* the use of numbers.

Contextualizing language instruction may best be accomplished by organizing the content of the language curriculum according to themes or topics that lend themselves to re-entry throughout the course of study (as suggested by what is known as a spiral curriculum). Our theme-based curriculum framework (see the Key Materials section) provides one such example of curriculum organization that would lend itself to contextualizing language instruction.

### ***Authenticity of Text and Task***

Related to the concept of contextualization is the notion of authenticity. Authentic texts or materials have been defined by Villegas Rogers and Medley (1988) as “...language samples—both oral and written—that reflect a naturalness of form, and an appropriateness of cultural and situational context that would be found in the language as used by native speakers” (p. 468). Texts that are prepared *for* native speakers *by* native speakers reflect the culture and societal values of everyday life. “No textbook culture note on the Hispanic family, for example, can replace the study of authentic birth or christening, wedding and death announcements, where, under the observable linguistic conventions, lie the rituals of events, the connotations of rites of passage, the meaning of ‘family,’ and the dynamic nature of culture” (Galloway & Labarca, 1990, p. 139).

For our purposes, any text that is *purposeful*, *meaningful*, and has a real *communicative intent* for a real audience can be considered to be authentic. In other words, it is authentic in the sense that it was not originally produced for language-teaching purposes but rather for the purpose of communicating meaning (Brinton et al., 1989, p. 17). This means that an e-mail message sent via the Internet by a student of German to another student of German is “authentic” as long as the message is meaningful (even though the message was not written by a native speaker for another native speaker). Furthermore, authenticity in a deeper sense does not reside in the text itself but rather is determined by how that text is used (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), i.e., the authenticity of the task. For example, if a teacher uses an article from a target culture magazine for the sole purpose of having the students underline all of the instances in which the subjunctive appears, the authenticity of the task disappears.

Let’s examine a task and consider ways in which it can be slightly altered to become more authentic.<sup>3</sup> Imagine that students are engaged in a unit on Costa Rica (or any other target country). As a culminating activity at the end of the unit, the teacher decides to have students create travel

brochures in the target language to demonstrate their knowledge of what they have learned. Such a task asks that the students pretend to act as native speakers, which they clearly are not. Kramsch (1993) would argue that authenticity involves having students be who they are—learners of the target language. To revise the task somewhat with an eye toward greater authenticity, the teacher can have students create travel itineraries for a group of students who will be traveling to Costa Rica, the intent being to demonstrate their knowledge of what they have learned by communicating it to other students.

Another example would involve having students at the beginning of the unit write letters in the target language to various travel agencies, tourist bureaus, and “Chamber of Commerce” equivalents to indicate that they (1) are students of Spanish, (2) are studying about Costa Rica, and (3) are interested in receiving travel information in Spanish. Such a task has a real purpose and a real audience. The added benefit is that it will also lead to additional authentic materials for classroom use! (This task, titled “Let’s Go to Costa Rica,” is described in detail in the *Handbook* and appears in the “From Presentation to Creation” section.)

A final example of an authentic task for this instructional setting is to have students write to Costa Rican students about Minnesota (i.e., their home state), given what they have learned about Costa Rica. A letter written for this task might include, for example, a comparison between Minnesota’s Boundary Waters and Costa Rica’s Tortuguero National Park in terms of their environmental restrictions.

Some of the tasks in the *Handbook* are authentic in that they are intended for a real audience (beyond the classroom). Others are not authentic in this sense. For example, in “My Favorite Recipe,” students work with partners to write a favorite recipe in the second language (not from the target culture). They share these recipes in class. While a valuable activity for eliciting communication in the classroom, the task cannot be considered authentic because it’s not designed for a real audience or purpose—native English speakers don’t need to read a recipe for macaroni and cheese, for example, written in French. However, the task can be adapted quite easily to increase its authenticity. One classroom teacher had students compile their recipes into a booklet to send home with an Amity Aide from the Ivory Coast, who had been working in their classroom that year. In this way, the task took on a real purpose and audience, and the students were very excited to be explaining (in French) how to prepare their favorite foods, knowing the Amity Aide would share the recipes with friends and family upon her return to her native country.

These suggestions highlight the importance of creating tasks that involve students in using language for real communicative purposes and for real audiences. Many of the tasks in the *Handbook* are authentic in this sense. For example, the task entitled “Creating Children’s Literature”

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involves having students write children's books to share with young students in immersion or FLES programs. It is important to note, however, that it is not possible to make every task or text authentic in the language classroom. Sometimes students need to pretend to be native speakers for a role play; sometimes they need to write for a hypothetical audience; sometimes they need to read a text that has been adapted for nonnative speakers of the language. Such activities are valuable and certainly have a place in the language curriculum. What is important (and possible!), however, is for teachers to find a good balance in their curriculum between tasks and texts that are less authentic and those that represent the principles of authenticity as described above. Teachers should also make sure that some of the texts they use in the curriculum contain language as used by native speakers so as to incorporate cultural and linguistic authenticity. A number of authentic texts (i.e., written by native speakers for native speakers of the target language) are used in the *Handbook* in conjunction with tasks and units. See, for example, the sample recipes in "Reading Recipes," the magazine article in "De Sol a Sol Sin Descanso," and the grade report in the unit called "Le Baccalauréat Français."

### **Process**

Language acquisition (be it first, second, or third...) is an ongoing process that requires a great deal of time, patience, thought, effort, and encouragement. A teacher who recognizes the importance of process in language learning understands, for example, that although a student is introduced to a grammatical structure (or function or topic) early on, s/he will need time to internalize that concept before being able to produce language in spontaneous interaction that shows an accurate representation of that concept. For example, students of French, German, and Spanish are taught the concept of gender and number agreement relatively early on in language classrooms. While the students may be able to produce language with accurate agreement on quizzes and tests, they often cannot when asked to produce language spontaneously for a meaningful communicative purpose. They need time to be able to see, hear, produce, and experience number and gender agreement in many meaningful contexts for a variety of purposes before they develop a "feel" for the concept—before it becomes part of their internalized language repertoire. This process takes years.

Heilenman and Kaplan (1985) provide a useful distinction among various degrees of control of function, topic (or context), and form as students develop proficiency. They argue that at different levels of proficiency, certain grammatical structures, functions, and topics or contexts need to be taught for *full control*, others for *partial control*, and still others for *conceptual control* (authors' emphasis, p. 63). Concepts that are taught for partial or conceptual control at one level of proficiency are recycled at subsequent levels where full or partial control is the goal (Heilenman & Kaplan, 1985). These degrees of control in Heilenman



and Kaplan's framework correlate with levels of proficiency as defined by the ACTFL guidelines. In other words, if students' proficiency is in the Novice range, they should be expected to demonstrate full control of certain functions (e.g., making lists), topics (e.g., dates, numbers, etc.), and accurate production of certain forms (e.g., question words). They can be expected to have partial control of various concepts that correspond to the Intermediate-Low/Mid range and conceptual control of concepts that are representative of the Intermediate-High and Advanced range. The point here is that acquisition of the functions, topics, and forms of language is a time-consuming process that requires teachers to recycle those functions, topics, and forms systematically and purposefully throughout their curriculum so that students can achieve higher degrees of control as they advance as language learners. Our preliminary model for a thematic curriculum framework is one way of envisioning this cyclical view of language instruction. The curricular themes (see Key Materials section) suggest some topics that can be considered for organizing the language curriculum; the communicative functions and language structures are stipulated within the context of the tasks and units that correspond to the various themes.

Process is also related to classroom instruction. In this sense, process involves several instructional phases—e.g., preparing students for an activity, carrying out the activity, and providing a follow-up that requires students to apply what they learned. The tasks and units in the *Handbook* break lessons down into pre-, during-, and post-activity stages to emphasize the need for an awareness of process in the classroom. In addition, other tasks or units illustrate process approaches to instruction: “Let’s go to Costa Rica” is a task that details the process approach to writing; the “Gender Roles” unit takes students through a process of cross-cultural exploration.

An awareness of process in language learning can also be reflected in assessment practices. Too often assessment practices focus on the product—that is, whatever the students produce, be it a paper, an oral presentation, a videotape, etc. But it is equally important to assess students' work in the process of working toward the final product. For example, if students are asked to work in small groups to co-create a project (e.g., a skit), the teacher may want to assess the students' ability to collaborate and work cooperatively. Such an assessment gets at process. If a writing assignment requires drafts, feedback, and revision, the teacher may decide to assess how well students attend to feedback in their revisions. This assessment, too, gets at process.

The teacher who recognizes the importance of process creates a classroom environment where process is reflected in instruction as well as assessment, where risk-taking is encouraged, and where meaningful communication is emphasized over accuracy for the *sake of accuracy*.

## Reflection

Closely related to the concept of process is reflection. Reflection involves *deliberate* thought. In essence, it engages an individual in a “conversation” with a situation, be it problematic, confusing, or illuminating. Our views of ourselves and our cultures and of the views of others and their cultures are never uniform or static. As Claire Kramsch (1991) explains, “...a large part of what we call culture is a social construct, the product of self and other[s] perceptions.” Indeed, language use, or communication, is embedded always within culture, and therefore is largely dependent upon peoples’ *perceptions* of meaning, which may or may not match the intended meaning. It is this very social, dynamic nature of language and culture that makes second languages different from and more special than other academic disciplines, and, hence, makes reflection so important for both students and teachers.

Students’ reflection should be both culturally and linguistically based, as well as focused on self-as-learner, self-as-human-being, and self-in-relationship-with-other. Students will not be able to engage in profound reflection on any of these topics overnight; reflection represents yet another process related to language learning which needs to occur gradually and carefully in an atmosphere where the students can ask questions freely and where risk-taking is encouraged (Tedick, 1992). Some activities that represent attention to student reflection include learning strategies, self-assessment, peer review, and “debriefing” exercises. Many of the tasks in the *Handbook* involve activities that encourage student reflection. For example, “Strategic Interaction” includes a debriefing stage where students are asked to reflect back on the language used during the role play and make suggestions for improving it. “My Favorite Recipe” engages learners in a peer assessment activity, encouraging them to reflect either on the presenter’s language use or the listener’s ability to understand. In the “Gender Roles” unit, students are asked to reflect on their own perceptions of gender roles throughout the unit as they learn about the perceptions of their German counterparts. Reflection should be encouraged at all levels of language learning—even the beginning levels. See the “Magazine Scanning” activity, which was designed for students at Novice proficiency levels.

Teachers must also be engaged in reflection as they plan for and carry out instructional activities. Most teachers do this naturally, asking themselves how a lesson could have been improved, for example. The *Handbook* is designed to encourage teachers to reflect as they use the tasks and units in their classrooms. Materials have been designed with large margins for writing notes and making changes, and each lesson is followed by a space for “reflections” where the teacher can jot down additional notes, resources, and ideas for future reference.

## Interaction

Learners must use language in meaningful interaction in order to learn it. In order to acquire language, learners cannot simply listen to or read “input;” they must interact with and negotiate the type of input they receive (Long, 1981). The term “interaction” implies face-to-face communication that involves negotiation of meaning, but it also means active involvement with all types of language use. Of great value in this discussion is the “Framework of Communicative Modes” used in the national standards document (Brecht & Walton, 1994, in Standards for Foreign Language Learning, 1996). In this framework, there are three communicative modes—interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. The *interpersonal mode* involves active negotiation of meaning between individuals who are in personal contact, for example, direct oral communication that is face-to-face or via telephone. It may also involve direct written communication, such as the exchange of personal letters, notes, or e-mail messages. Therefore, this mode includes all four language modalities—speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The *interpretive mode*, which focuses on receptive abilities (listening, reading, viewing), involves the comprehension or interpretation of oral or written messages. Examples include reading a text, listening to the radio, or watching a movie. At times these receptive abilities are mistaken as passive rather than active activities. Yet research has shown that readers and listeners must function as active participants in the act of comprehending. They must *co-construct meaning* as they work to interpret the input provided. This act of co-construction implies interaction between text and reader/listener/viewer even though the opportunity for negotiation of meaning may not be present. The *presentational mode*, involving the productive skills of writing and speaking, refers to the creation of spoken or written communication for an audience with whom there is no immediate personal contact. Extended oral presentations and written essays are examples of language use in this mode. As writers or speakers work to construct meaning, they must consider their purpose and imagine interaction with an audience. That is, they must rely on understanding of the purpose for the communication and knowledge of audience as they choose the words and put together phrases to communicate meaning. These three communicative modes correspond to the three national communication standards. Interaction, then, as it’s interpreted in the *Handbook* and in CAPRII, involves language use within these three communicative modes.

A teacher who understands the importance of interaction organizes the language classroom to minimize teacher talk and maximize student discourse. This involves organizing classroom activities so that students will have reasons to respond to and interact with one another as well as others outside of the classroom. At the same time, it is not enough to have students interact without feedback or attention to form. In other

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words, *quality* of interaction is key. Teachers must create a balance between meaning (function and content) and accuracy. To achieve this balance, it is important to incorporate different kinds of interactive activities for different purposes. At times, spontaneous interaction should occur, where the focus is entirely on communicating meaning, regardless of the accuracy. Other times, students should be expected not only to communicate meaning, but also to do so accurately. Such instances will be characterized by tasks that are reflective of the presentational mode of communication. They involve time for planning and, when appropriate, rehearsal. Most importantly, accuracy must always be addressed in a meaningful context. Drawing students' attention to accurate forms and providing them with constructive feedback that encourages them to reflect on the linguistic accuracy of their output is critical, yet needs to occur in ways that encourage language production, not inhibit it. Lyster's (1998) recent work on types of corrective feedback in advanced immersion classrooms has shown that when teachers provide feedback that requires students to think about and respond to the feedback in some way, the students are more likely to repair their errors and improve their linguistic accuracy.

It's important to remember that the higher the level of proficiency, the greater one's expectations for linguistic accuracy should be. Heilenman and Kaplan (1985) emphasize that proficiency-oriented curriculum and instruction must strive for a balance among function, context (or topic/content), and accuracy, "while at the same time allowing for the imbalance frequently seen at the Novice or Intermediate levels where one component may compensate for another" (p. 60).

Virtually all of the classroom tasks and units in the *Handbook* encourage interaction in one or more communicative modes, because this *Handbook* is about language *use*. Those tasks that focus on face-to-face interaction, characteristic of the interpersonal mode, are found in the "Negotiated Interaction" section. Those that focus on the interpretive mode are found in the second section of tasks, "From Comprehension to Interpretation." And those that emphasize the presentational mode can be found in the section entitled "From Presentation to Creation." Many of the tasks throughout the *Handbook* also suggest ways of focusing on form and integrating feedback in the context of interactive activities.

### **Integration**

The final CAPRII concept refers to the integration of a variety of factors. It represents the integration of content and language, including both language and culture and also language with other disciplines. It also refers to the integration of the four modalities (reading, listening, writing, speaking).

Integration of the four modalities is important. Creating classroom activities that require students to use language within two or more of the

four modalities helps to reinforce the concepts being emphasized. This approach also lends itself well to a variety of learning styles. For example, writing helps some students improve their listening skills. It has also been shown that reading helps students develop competence in writing. Practice in one modality often results in improved competence in other modalities. In addition, by integrating all modalities in curriculum and instruction, the teacher considers how students can be using language for a variety of purposes. Many of the tasks and all of the units in the *Handbook* integrate the four modalities. Some tasks emphasize one modality over the others, but include ideas for extending the tasks to incorporate additional modalities. With the increased focus on the national standards, it is also important for teachers to begin to understand how the four modalities work together in the framework of the communicative modes discussed in the previous section.

Integrating content and language suggests following a content-based approach to language teaching wherein the linguistic elements that make up language (i.e., grammatical structures, vocabulary, etc.) emerge naturally from the content and are understood within the context of that content. A content-based approach to language teaching emphasizes language use and lends itself well to interdisciplinary curriculum design. In content-based instruction, the purpose is to teach or reinforce content via the target language. Content, not language, is the organizing principle for the task or unit. Language is the vehicle that allows access to the content areas and related tasks. Content may be related to other academic disciplines in the curriculum (science, anthropology) or may be related to cultural themes.

Languages need to be integrated with other disciplines in the school curriculum. In fact, the importance of connecting language and other disciplines is highlighted in the national standards (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996, see standard 3.1). It is time for languages to be understood as *central* to a well-defined school curriculum rather than peripheral. “Learning today is no longer restricted to a specific discipline; it has become interdisciplinary” (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996, p. 50). To approach language teaching from a content-based or thematic perspective allows one to see how a variety of subject matter areas can be meaningfully and purposefully integrated. For example, a unit on the Maya can easily incorporate attention to history, anthropology, mathematics, science, and art. Several of the tasks and units in the *Handbook* attend to the connection between language and other disciplines, for example, “Campaign Graffiti” and “Los Maya y El Norte.”

An integration of language and content also occurs when the content is based on cultural themes. Integrating language and culture is key in effective language teaching and learning. If language is seen as social practice, then culture must become the core of language teaching (Kramsch,

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1993). As we are becoming a smaller, more interdependent global community than ever before, culture must take center stage in the language classroom. It can no longer be limited to a single perspective on surface elements and cultural “facts” found in most textbooks. Instead, language classrooms must become places where students and teachers understand themselves as cultural beings and begin to discover the complexity of the concept of culture as they view cultures both within and outside of the U.S. from a number of different perspectives (Kramsch, 1993; National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996; Tedick et al., 1993). Cultural aspects have been considered for all of the tasks and units in the *Handbook*, and are highlighted on the first page of each. Some of the tasks place an emphasis on cultural issues, such as “Soul of Senegal” and “Celebrating the Day of the Dead.” Others, like “Market a Movie” and “Wedding Celebration” don’t emphasize cultural issues but incorporate some attention to cultural aspects nevertheless.

All of the units and some of the tasks in the *Handbook* provide good examples of content-based curriculum and instruction. For example, “Senegal by Numbers” is content-based because it focuses on having students understand Senegalese demographics in relationship to U.S. demographics. The content in this case might be similar to content students might encounter in another academic discipline, such as geography, and also through cultural study in a language classroom. Through the activities, students gain greater insight into the differences between the Senegal and the U.S. and the reasons that underlie those differences. Within the context of this content, students practice complex numbers, comparative constructions, the present tense, and question formation.

Most of the tasks in the *Handbook* are not content-based, however, because the purpose behind the development of the *Handbook* was to provide teachers with principles and a range of examples that would help them to increase language use in the classroom, key to increasing their students’ language proficiency. The tasks are excellent proficiency-oriented activities that engage students in language use for meaningful purposes, but aren’t necessarily driven by particular content. For instance, “Strategic Interaction” is a wonderful activity that combines role play and cooperative learning. But “Strategic Interaction” in and of itself is not a content-based activity or lesson. The “generic” strategic interaction activity (found in the Negotiated Interaction section of the *Handbook*) can be contrasted with an application of strategic interaction within a content-based activity, “Las Jóvenes Maquiladoras.” In this activity, the focus is on having students understand the various perspectives around the issue of sweatshops and exploitation of young workers while communicating in the target language with peers. The same role play activity is used, but the content in this case is the key factor.

The integration of language and content (be it related to academic subject matters or cultural themes) will likely receive much more attention in the field of language education in years to come, particularly with the focus in the national standards on cultural understanding and the call to connect languages with other academic disciplines. Integrating language and content expects that teachers attend to both content curriculum and language curriculum and find ways to balance the two in instruction. A number of excellent resources are available to assist language teachers who are interested in content-based approaches<sup>4</sup>. See, for example, Snow and Brinton (1997), Genesee (1994), Met (1991), and Snow, Met & Genesee (1989).

### **Conclusion**

In summary, CAPRII describes a number of important pedagogical principles that language teachers should implement in their teaching practices. These principles are reflected throughout the tasks and units in this *Handbook*, though it is important to remember that not all tasks incorporate all of the principles simultaneously. It is hoped that the examples provided throughout the *Handbook* will help teachers to consider how the principles of CAPRII can enhance their own teaching and, ultimately, student learning.

## **Performance Assessment<sup>5</sup>**

### ***Rethinking Assessment: Focus on Language Use***

The national standards and the Minnesota Articulation Project emphasize *what students should know and be able to do*. The tasks provided in this *Handbook* require that students use language for a variety of communicative purposes. It follows that assessment must focus on what students can *do* with language in addition to what they know about language.

In the field of language education a gradual change toward more of a focus on performance measures has indeed been observed. Certainly, large-scale language tests have moved toward measures of language performance beginning with the proficiency movement that characterized the 1980's in the U.S. (Bachman, 1990). The proficiency tests developed as part of the Minnesota Articulation Project (for which this *Handbook* was created) certainly offer excellent examples of contextualized, performance-based measures. The Center for Applied Linguistics has been compiling descriptions of assessment instruments for K-8 foreign language settings, many of which are performance-based (Thompson, 1997). Recent additions to the collection show an increasing use of alternative,

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performance-based measures (Thompson, 2000-2001). The Foreign Language Test Database,<sup>6</sup> containing information about secondary and college-level foreign language tests, shows a similar pattern of movement toward alternative, performance-based measures. And a number of states have led local initiatives (through grant-funding) demonstrating the prevalence of alternative measures and performance-based assessment (e.g., *Assessment, Articulation and Accountability*, 1999).

The emphasis on standards and language use in the 90's has also led to more of a focus on performance measures. As a follow-up to the national standards, ACTFL's performance guidelines were published in 1998 (ACTFL, 1998; Swender & Duncan, 1998). These guidelines redefine proficiency related to the three communicative modes incorporated in the standards (interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational) and describe language performance at a range of levels. The Performance Assessment Units (PAUs) being developed for classroom-based assessment related to the communication standards (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996) are also performance-based ("Step three, the PAU project," 2000; Thompson, 2000-2001). At the same time, what's unclear is the degree to which teachers are using such assessments in their classrooms. It has been our experience that it is happening less than we would like.

In many language classrooms, teachers have incorporated communicative activities that emphasize language use, yet often assessment remains focused on grammatical structures and vocabulary. This leads to a significant mismatch between instruction and assessment and also sends students the message that only grammar and vocabulary are important. There are very real reasons why assessment tends to be based on discrete-point tests of grammar and vocabulary—it's relatively straightforward to assess students' knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, it's time-efficient, and teachers and students (not to mention parents and administrators) are comfortable with these types of assessments. It is human nature to be comfortable with what we know well and to be skeptical of and uncomfortable with the new or unknown.

Assessing grammatical and vocabulary knowledge is relatively straightforward, because test items usually have just one right answer and therefore create the illusion of being "objective." In most schools, students are taught from the time they enter kindergarten that what's important is knowing the one right answer. Yet in the real world, few if any questions or problems have only one right answer. And in the world of language learning, the same applies. There's never one right way to communicate meaning—language is by its very nature subjective and creative. To communicate otherwise to students is to do them a disservice. Moreover, research on language acquisition in past decades has repeatedly demonstrated that *knowledge about language* does not reflect one's *ability to use language* to communicate effectively. Heilenman and Kaplan (1985)



describe the dilemma as follows:

Learning a certain number of adjectives along with their morphological changes does not translate directly into being able to describe, just as learning the various uses and forms of the subjunctive is not the same thing as being able to defend one's opinions and state one's feelings. This is the gap that the traditional, structurally based language program has not been able to bridge....The stated goal of such programs, language use, [is] not met because the real goal, *in terms of what students [are] expected to do*, pertain[s] primarily to form rather than to function and [is] more concerned with complete sentences than with discourse-level competence (p. 58, emphasis added).

No where is this gap more pronounced than in the arena of classroom assessment.

Discrete-point tests of grammar and vocabulary also dominate classroom assessment because they are time-efficient. In too many districts, teachers are expected to give final exams and to submit final grades to the administration within 24 hours after the exam. Such policies force teachers into relying on discrete-point measures. With the advent of standards-based curriculum and instruction these policies will need to change because the emphasis is on *what students can do*. For teachers who need to assess what students can do with language, the only option is a move towards performance measures.

This move towards performance assessment is difficult, because both teachers and students are comfortable and familiar with discrete-point assessments of grammar and vocabulary. Many language teachers had these experiences as language learners years ago, and it is difficult for them to change what they perceive worked for them. Performance measures that involve quality judgments of students' ability to use language are admittedly difficult, subjective, and time-consuming. Teachers and students (and parents and administrators!) need to learn to be comfortable with the subjective nature of performance assessments. Teachers should speak openly about these measures with students and parents and help them to become more tolerant of the ambiguity that accompanies them. It may help to point out how performance measures are commonly used in our culture. The sports world offers a number of examples. While objective measures of minutes and seconds or meters and centimeters can be used to judge performance in the 100-meter race, or the high jump, subjective measures (usually on a scale of 1-10) must be used to judge performance in events like ice-skating and diving. Similarly, in the work world, performance is measured subjectively on the basis of quality judgments—consider, for example, how a teacher's ability to teach is assessed! If we are

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comfortable with these types of performance assessments, so too must we learn to be comfortable with an emphasis on performance assessment in the language classroom where the focus is on students' ability to use language. Just as with any significant, meaningful change, teachers and students will need to proceed gradually and to learn to be comfortable taking risks by trying new ways of demonstrating and assessing language use.

It is imperative to note that an emphasis on language use and performance assessment is not intended to encourage teachers to neglect attention to form or accuracy. Instead, it should contextualize attention to form and accuracy. The tasks and units in this *Handbook* have all been designed to emphasize language use and provide detailed descriptions of how to assess students' performance, often with accompanying checklists or rubrics. Attention to form and accuracy is embedded in the rubrics and must not be overlooked. We hope that the many contextualized examples of performance assessment throughout the *Handbook* will help ease the transition for language teachers to performance-based instruction and assessment.

### ***Moving Towards Performance Assessment:***

#### ***The Changing Role of the Student in the Process***

In the classroom, performance assessment [also referred to as “authentic assessment” and “alternative assessment” in the literature (e.g., Hart, 1994)] is characterized by tasks that are worthwhile, significant, meaningful, and form part of the curriculum. It provides information on what students can actually *do* with language and their reflection on that process. It is congruent with a learner-centered, communicative approach to language teaching. Performance assessments are not only designed and structured differently from traditional tests, but are also graded or scored differently. Student performance is evaluated on the basis of clearly defined performance indicators, criteria, or standards that emphasize students' strengths instead of highlighting their weaknesses.

In addition to traditional measures of language competence, performance assessments have been developed in response to current interest in learner-centered pedagogy. Proponents of learner-centered pedagogy believe that teachers and learners should share power and that learners should have more control over their educational process (c.f., Nunan, 1988). In this sense, the primary goal of learner-centered instruction is to increase students' participation in the learning process by assisting them in establishing learning and self-improvement goals, choosing effective learning methods and strategies, and becoming involved in evaluating their own work and that of their peers.

Learner-centered instruction implies that teachers must dedicate some class time to activities not normally observed in traditional language

classes, such as teaching learners how to learn a language, how to make use of available tools and resources, how to use language learning strategies, and how to reflect on their own learning. Language learners assume responsibilities traditionally taken on solely by the instructor, including the evaluation of their own learning, as well as the provision of feedback to their classmates.

Assessment procedures in any educational process should be congruent with teaching procedures. In other words, assessment practices should align with classroom objectives and instruction. The assessment procedures that we emphasize in the *Handbook* are based on the idea that students can learn to evaluate their own learning and, in turn, learn from that process. They reflect the belief that learners should be involved in determining criteria for successful completion of communicative tasks and should have the opportunity to assess their own performance and that of their peers. In addition, just as learner-centered pedagogy emphasizes both the learning *process* and the *product*, various forms of alternative assessment give learners opportunities to reflect not only on their linguistic development, but also on their learning processes (i.e., what helps them learn and what might help them learn better). Assessment thus becomes more formative rather than summative. Learners can provide one another with feedback on their performance, for example reflecting on how well they performed a communicative task through group processing (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993).

Time spent on teaching students how to evaluate their own work through self-reflection and how to evaluate the work of their peers is not time lost for instruction. On the contrary, by understanding the traits of effective writers and speakers, students internalize the traits and become more effective communicators. As Baron (1991) states: “When students internalize a definition of what quality means and can learn to recognize it, they have developed a very valuable critical ability. They can talk with [...] their teacher about the quality of their work and take steps to acquire the knowledge and skills required to improve it” (p. 190).

### ***What are the challenges that come with this process?***

As with any change from an accustomed approach, the use of performance assessments can create special challenges. First and foremost, teachers will need to read about and practice extensively with various forms of these assessments so that they become comfortable with them. At the same time, teachers will need to prepare their students for the use of these assessments. Learners who are used to traditional, teacher-centered classrooms may be reluctant to assume new roles and responsibilities. They may also be skeptical that peers can provide them with feedback that will enhance their learning. Teachers must be sure to explain the rationale for performance assessment fully to learners. They will also need to

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provide students with guidance and instruction on how to reflect on their performance and evaluate it and how to evaluate their peers' performance. Concrete suggestions on how to go about this are offered throughout the *Handbook*.

It is also important to emphasize the need to create a cooperative learning environment before attempting to use performance assessments. Students must be in a supportive environment if they are expected to reflect thoughtfully on their learning processes. They must also feel comfortable with one another to provide constructive and honest feedback on their peers' work. Otherwise, they will provide perfunctory comments on other students' work to avoid hurt feelings.

For these reasons, it is important to introduce the use of performance assessments gradually. Not only do teachers need to take time to become accustomed to these assessments; learners also need to understand how they will benefit from them and how they can use them effectively. These assessments can easily be used alongside the more traditional means of assessment common to foreign language classrooms. A combination of alternative measures and more traditional forms of assessment makes it possible for the teacher to compare the results of the various approaches, leading to a more comprehensive picture of students' language performance than either alternative or traditional measures alone would provide. To allow students to become accustomed to them, the teacher should begin using checklists, scales, and rubrics (described in a subsequent section) to evaluate students' performance. This enables students to see their use modeled and become accustomed to them. In fact, a teacher may wish to begin with just *one* rubric (either holistic or analytic since these types lend themselves to use with a variety of tasks) and use it consistently for a period of time so that students become comfortable with it; other rubric can then be introduced gradually. Once students are familiar with the use of checklists, scales, and rubrics for evaluation, they can begin to assess their own learning and provide feedback to their peers. Alternative assessments are generally designed to be an integral part or a natural culmination of a sequence of learning activities, but their use by both teachers and students requires careful preparation and should be implemented gradually.

### ***The benefits that accompany the challenges***

Changing the way we think about assessment simultaneously changes the way we think about teaching and the way students think about learning (Hart, 1994). This is perhaps one of the greatest benefits to implementing performance assessment—it focuses teachers' and students' attention on language *use*. Students become active participants in assessment activities that are designed to reveal what they can do with language rather than emphasizing their weaknesses. Teachers find these

assessment techniques valuable in helping them to align instruction and assessment and emphasizing for students communication for meaningful purposes.

As Baron (1991) states, “many educators believe that performance-based assessments more closely represent the kinds of activities that we want our students to be able to undertake as members of society and that practicing for the assessment improves these valued skills and understandings” (p. 187). Certainly this is true in the case of language classrooms where students are learning to communicate in situations similar to those they will encounter in the “real world.” Baron (1991) also points out that “there is a growing number of educators around the world who believe that there is little difference between an effective performance assessment task and an effective curriculum or learning task” (p. 191). This means that many of the activities that students do in a communicative, proficiency-oriented classroom can be used as assessment tasks, although you should make sure to include a wide variety of task types that reflect real language use. All of the activities described in the *Handbook* lend themselves to performance assessment because they emphasize what students can do with the language. Moreover, the tasks are accompanied by a detailed description of the assessment procedures and by sample rubrics or checklists that can be used to evaluate student performance on the tasks.

The detailed descriptions in the rubrics help teachers first to articulate and secondly to internalize a sense of what constitutes quality of performance and makes it easier for teachers to judge students’ performance consistently. They also help to “sell” the notion of subjectivity in the assessment process. The more explicitly a grade or point is defined, the more comfortable students (and teachers) will be with the use of performance tasks and assessments in the language classroom.

### ***Using checklists and rubrics for assessing student performance on various language tasks***

Whereas a checklist simply provides an indication of whether a specific criterion, characteristic, or behavior is present, a rubric provides a measure of quality of performance on the basis of established criteria. It is important to mention that students should be given copies of the checklist or rubric that will be used to evaluate their performance on a task *prior to* doing the task or beginning the project so that expectations are made clear. Teachers should also discuss the rubrics with students and, if possible, provide examples of student work that corresponds to the different points or criteria on the scale. It is always helpful for students to see models of work that would be “excellent” vs. “satisfactory” vs. “below standard” or “in need of improvement.”

## Checklists

Checklists are often used for observing performance or behavior in order to keep track of a student's progress or work over time. They can also be used to determine whether students have met established criteria on a task. Below is an example of a speaking task and a sample checklist that might be used to check whether students meet the criteria needed to complete the task successfully.

**Task Description.** For a unit on Latinos in the U.S., students are exploring issues related to Latinos in Minnesota. They are instructed to make contact with a native Spanish speaker who has immigrated to Minnesota (teacher provides a list of resources for making contact). Students are to conduct a short interview with this individual and report back to the class. In an oral presentation, they are to (1) briefly describe the interviewee (gender, age, place of birth, occupation, etc.), (2) explain what brought him/her to Minnesota, (3) describe at least one challenge the interviewee has faced or faces in Minnesota, (4) describe how this individual maintains a connection to his/her heritage, and (5) describe one item of interest that came out of the interview. Students are told that they will need to speak for a minimum of three minutes and that they are not to read to the class and can only refer to minimal notes while presenting. They are advised to rehearse, but not to memorize. A checklist for assessing students' completion of the task components might look like the one in Figure 2.

**Fig. 2 Checklist for Oral Presentation of Interview**

Criteria	Yes	No
Describes Interviewee (gender, age, place of birth, occupation).		
Explains interviewee's immigration to Minnesota.		
Describes at least on challenge the interviewee faces.		
Describes how interviewee maintains connection to culture.		
Describes point of interest.		
Speaks for a minimum of 3 minutes.		
Evidence of rehearsal (not reading to class).		

Note that a checklist like this simply indicates whether the student addressed a specific portion of the task in their performance; it does not offer a judgment of the quality of performance.

Brown and Yule (1983) suggest a checklist-type scoring matrix for use with information-gap activities. The intention is to assess the speaker's communicative effectiveness. The first step is to select or create an information-gap task in which a speaker must describe or provide instructions to a listener, who follows the instructions or completes some task based on the description. For example, a speaker must explain to a listener how to assemble a kitchen utensil having five parts or components. The listener has the various parts of the utensil in front of him and is required to assemble the parts on the basis of the speaker's instructions. The speaker must be seated in such a way so that she cannot see what the listener is doing. The speaker begins by identifying the first part, then the second part and explains their relationship to one another, or how they fit together.

She continues in this manner until all five parts are identified and their relationship with one another is described. While such tasks may not be considered “authentic” in the pure sense of the term, they do elicit the kinds of linguistic structures that students need to internalize during the process of language acquisition (Brown & Yule, 1983). A checklist for assessing the speaker’s ability to communicate effectively is set up as in Figure 3.

**Fig. 3 Checklist for Information Gap Exercise**

Required Information	Speaker			
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)...
component 1	✓	✓		
component 2	✓	✓		
relationship between 2 and 1			✓	
component 3	✓	✓		
relationship between 3 and 2/1	✓	✓		
component 4	✓	✓		
relationship between 4 and 3/2/1	✓	✓		
component 5			✓	
relationship between 5 and the rest			✓	

The teacher listens to speaker “a’s” instructions and marks a check whenever she identifies a component and describes its relationship to another component. The same procedure is followed for speaker “b,” “c,” etc. In the sample checklist in Figure 3, speaker “b” was able to communicate all information effectively, whereas speaker “a’s” performance lacked some important details. In assessing communicative effectiveness, the teacher must be careful to listen to what the *speaker* says and not be influenced by what a listener does or does not do. That is, a listener may figure out a task and complete it without necessarily having explicit instructions from the speaker; conversely, the speaker may describe all of the required information and the listener may not follow the instructions correctly. Figure 3 may also be adapted to assess listening comprehension, in which case the teacher will pay attention to what a *listener* does on the basis of what a speaker says. Checklists such as these for assessing both speakers’ and listeners’ performance in an information gap activity appear in the *Handbook* along with the “My Favorite Recipe” task.

Checklists can be useful for classroom assessment because they are easy to construct and use, and they align closely with tasks. They can also be used very effectively for peer assessment of language use. At the same time, they are limited in that they do not provide an assessment of the relative quality of a student’s performance on a particular task.

## Rubrics

In contrast to checklists, rubrics or scales provide an indication of *quality* of performance on a particular task. Rubrics have received much attention in recent years due to the increased emphasis on performance-based assessment. They are primarily used for language tasks that involve some kind of production on the part of the student, be it oral or written. Rubrics are created on the basis of four different scale types—holistic, analytic, primary trait, and multitrait—each of which was developed originally for large scale writing assessment. Scoring rubrics are often used with benchmarks or exemplars—samples that act as standards against which other samples are judged (Hart, 1994).

*Holistic rubrics.* When teachers use holistic scales or rubrics, they are responding to language performance (writing or speaking) as a *whole*. Each score on a holistic scale represents an overall impression; one integrated score is assigned to a performance. The emphasis in holistic scoring is on what a student does well rather than what he or she has not done well (White, 1985). Holistic rubrics commonly have four or six points. Figure 4 shows a sample four-point holistic scale created for the purposes of assessing writing performance.

Fig. 4 Holistic Scale for Assessing Writing\*

4	<b>Excellent</b> —Communicative; reflects awareness of sociolinguistic aspects; well-organized and coherent; contains a range of grammatical structures with minor errors that do not impede comprehension; good vocabulary range.
3	<b>Good</b> —Comprehensible; some awareness of sociolinguistic aspects; adequate organization and coherence; adequate use of grammatical structures with some major errors that do not impede comprehension; limited vocabulary range.
2	<b>Fair</b> —Somewhat comprehensible; little awareness of sociolinguistic aspects; some problems with organization and coherence; reflects basic use of grammatical structures with very limited range and major errors that at times impede comprehension; basic vocabulary used.
1	<b>Poor</b> —Barely comprehensible; no awareness of sociolinguistic aspects; lacks organization and coherence; basic use of grammatical structures with many minor and major errors that often impede comprehension; basic to poor vocabulary range.

\*adapted from scales found in Cohen (1994) and Shohamy (1985)

More examples of holistic rubrics can be found in the *Handbook*—see, for example, the rubrics developed for “Tic-Tac-Toe Story Grids” and “Fables through Comics.” Those two examples show holistic rubrics that have been written to align closely with the task. However, holistic rubrics are often written generically so that they can be used over and over with a variety of tasks. Holistic rubrics have the advantage of leading to efficient assessment of students’ written or oral performance, but they do not provide students with specific feedback on aspects of their performance that were strong or need improvement.



Holistic rubrics are often used in large-scale assessment because of their efficiency and their tendency to lead to greater consistency among multiple raters. At the same time, they can be used very effectively with classroom-based performance tasks.

*Analytic rubrics.* Analytic scales are divided into separate categories representing different aspects or dimensions of performance. Each dimension is scored separately, then dimension scores are added to determine an overall score. Common aspects for writing performance include content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. On a scale having these different categories, an essay would be evaluated by applying a different score to each category. This allows the teacher to weigh certain aspects more heavily than others. For example, content may have a total point range of 30 whereas mechanics may be attributed a total of 10 or 15 points.

One of the best known analytic rubrics used for writing assessment in the field of English as a second language (ESL) was developed by Hughey et al. (1983, p. 140). This rubric has five categories—content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Drawing heavily upon characteristics of the Hughey et al. scale, Tedick and Klee developed an analytic rubric for use in scoring essays written for an immersion quarter for undergraduates studying Spanish (Klee, Tedick, & Cohen 1995). A revised version of the rubric appears in Figure 5.

Note that the scale in Figure 5 assigns different weights to different features. This allows a teacher to give more emphasis to content than to grammar or mechanics, for example. The option to weigh characteristics on the scale represents an advantage to analytic scoring. The decision to weigh certain criteria or not rests with the task, the purpose, and the level of the students.

**Fig. 5 Analytic Writing Scale for the Spanish FLIP Program\***

**University of Minnesota, Revised July, 1996**

*CONTENT-30 TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE*

Score	Range	Criteria	Comments
	30-27	Excellent to Very Good– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• addresses all aspects of the prompt</li> <li>• provides good support for and development of all ideas with range of detail</li> <li>• substantive</li> </ul>	
	26-22	Good to Average– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prompt adequately addressed</li> <li>• ideas not fully developed or supported with detail, though main ideas are clear</li> <li>• less substance</li> </ul>	
	21-17	Fair– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prompt may not be fully addressed (writer may appear to skirt aspects of prompt)</li> <li>• ideas not supported well, main ideas lack detailed development</li> <li>• little substance</li> </ul>	
	16-13	Poor– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• doesn't adequately address prompt</li> <li>• little to no support or development of ideas</li> <li>• non-substantive</li> </ul>	

*ORGANIZATION-20 TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE*

Score	Range	Criteria	Comments
	20-18	Excellent to Very Good– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• well-framed and organized (with clear introduction, conclusion)</li> <li>• coherent</li> <li>• succinct</li> <li>• cohesive (excellent use of connective words)</li> </ul>	
	17-14	Good to Average– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adequate, but loose organization with introduction and conclusion (though they maybe limited or one of the two may be missing)</li> <li>• somewhat coherent</li> <li>• more wordy rather than succinct</li> <li>• somewhat cohesive (good use of connective words)</li> </ul>	
	13-10	Fair– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lacks good organization (no evidence of introduction, conclusion)</li> <li>• ideas may be disconnected, confused</li> <li>• lacks coherence</li> <li>• wordy and repetitive</li> <li>• lacks consistent use of cohesive elements</li> </ul>	
	9-7	Poor– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• confusing, disconnected organization</li> <li>• lacks coherence so much so that writing is difficult to follow</li> <li>• lacks cohesion</li> </ul>	

LANGUAGE USE/GRAMMAR/MORPHOLOGY–25 TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE

Score	Range	Criteria	Comments
	25–22	Excellent to Very Good– • great variety of grammatical forms (e.g., range of indicative verb forms; use of subjunctive) • complex sentence structure (e.g., compound sentences, embedded clauses) • evidence of “Spanish-like” construction • mastery of agreement (subj/verb; number/gender) • very few errors (if any) overall with none that obscure meaning	
	21–18	Good to Average– • some variety of grammatical forms (e.g., attempts, though not always accurate, of range verb forms, use of subjunctive) • attempts, though not always accurate, at complex sentence structure (e.g., compound sentences, embedded clauses) • little evidence of “Spanish-like” construction, though without clear translations from English • occasional errors with agreement • some errors (minor) that don’t obscure meaning	
	17–11	Fair– • less variety of grammatical forms (e.g., little range of verb forms; inaccurate, if any, attempts at subjunctive) • simplistic sentence structure • evidence of “English-like” construction (e.g., some direct translation of phrases) • consistent errors (e.g., with agreement), but few of which may obscure meaning	
	10–5	Poor– • very little variety of grammatical forms • simplistic sentence structure that contains consistent errors, especially with basic aspects such as agreement • evidence of translation from English • frequent and consistent errors that may obscure meaning	

VOCABULARY/WORD USAGE–20 TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE

Score	Range	Criteria	Comments
	20-18	Excellent to Very Good– • sophisticated, academic range • extensive variety of words • effective and appropriate word/idiom choice and usage • appropriate register	
	17-14	Good to Average– • good, but not extensive (less academic), range or variety • occasional errors of word/idiom choice or usage (some evidence of invention of “false” cognates), but very few or none that obscure meaning • appropriate register	
	13-10	Fair– • Limited and “non-academic” range (frequent repetition of words) • more consistent errors with word/idiom choice or usage (frequent evidence of translation; invention of “false” cognates) that may (though seldom) obscure meaning • some evidence of inappropriate register	
	9-7	Poor– • very limited range of words • consistent and frequent errors with word/idiom choice or usage (ample evidence of translation) • meaning frequently obscured • evidence of inappropriate register	

MECHANICS–5 TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE

Score	Range	Criteria	Comments
	5	Excellent to Very Good– • demonstrates mastery of conventions • few errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, & use of accents	
	4	Good to Average– • occasional errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and use of accents, but meaning is not obscured	
	3	Fair– • frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and use of accents that at times confuses or obscures meaning	
	2	Poor– • no mastery of conventions • dominated by errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and use of accents	

TOTAL SCORE \_\_\_\_\_ COMMENTS:

Figure 6 provides an example of an analytic rubric that can be used for assessing speaking. This rubric does not emphasize one feature over another, but certainly can be adapted to do so. Like holistic rubrics, analytic rubrics are often designed to be very generic so that they can be used with a variety of tasks.

**Fig. 6 Analytic Scale for Assessing Speaking\***

<b>Pronunciation</b>	
4	<b>Excellent</b> – No consistent or conspicuous mispronunciation; approaches native-like pronunciation with good intonation and juncture.
3	<b>Good</b> – Some identifiable deviations in pronunciation, but with no phonemic errors. Non-native accent evident with occasional mispronunciations that do not interfere with understanding.
2	<b>Fair</b> – Identifiable deviations in pronunciation with some phonemic errors. Non-native accent requires careful listening and mispronunciations lead to occasional misunderstanding.
1	<b>Poor</b> – Frequent pronunciation errors with a heavy non-native accent. Many phonemic errors that make understanding difficult.
<b>Fluency</b>	
4	<b>Excellent</b> – Speech is effortless and smooth with speed that approaches that of a native-speaker.
3	<b>Good</b> – Speech is mostly smooth but with some hesitation and unevenness caused primarily by rephrasing and groping for words.
2	<b>Fair</b> – Speech is low and often hesitant and jerky. Sentences may be left uncompleted, but speaker is able to continue however haltingly.
1	<b>Poor</b> – Speech is very slow and exceedingly halting, strained and stumbling except for short or memorized expressions. Difficult for a listener to perceive continuity in utterances and speaker may not be able to continue.
<b>Grammar/Language Use</b>	
4	<b>Excellent</b> – Very strong command of grammatical structure and some evidence of difficult, complex patterns and idioms. Makes infrequent errors that do not impede comprehension.
3	<b>Good</b> – Good command of grammatical structures but with imperfect control of some patterns. Less evidence of complex patterns and idioms. Limited number of errors that are not serious and do not impede comprehension.
2	<b>Fair</b> – Fair control of most basic syntactic patterns. Speaker always conveys meaning in simple sentences; some important grammatical patterns are uncontrolled and errors may occasionally impede comprehension.
1	<b>Poor</b> – Any accuracy is limited to set or memorized expressions; limited control of even basic syntactic patterns. Frequent errors impede Comprehension.
<b>Vocabulary</b>	
4	<b>Excellent</b> – Very good range of vocabulary with evidence of sophistication and native-like expression. Strong command of idiomatic expressions. In-frequent use of circumlocution because particular words are rarely lacking.
3	<b>Good</b> – Good range of vocabulary with limited evidence of sophistication. Some expressions distinctly nonnative-like but always comprehensible. Limited evidence of idiomatic expressions. Speaker is comfortable with circumlocution when lacking a particular word.
2	<b>Fair</b> – Adequate range of vocabulary with no evidence of sophistication. Some distinctly nonnative expressions or errors in word choice may impede comprehension. No evidence of idiomatic expressions. Speaker has difficulty with circumlocution when lacking a particular word.
1	<b>Poor</b> – Limited range of vocabulary. Lack of repertoire and frequent errors in word choice often impeded comprehension. Speaker shows no attempt in circumlocution when lacking a particular word.

**Total Score** \_\_\_\_\_

\*adapted from shohamy (1985) pp. 183-4

Analytic rubrics also have the advantage of providing more information to students about the strengths and weaknesses of various aspects of their language performance. One of the greatest criticisms of analytic scoring, however, is that the parts do not necessarily add up to the whole, or “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” In other words, providing separate scores for different aspects of a student’s writing or speaking performance may be considered artificial in that it does not give the teacher (or student) a good assessment of the “whole” of a performance. In addition, analytic rubrics are by their very nature more cumbersome and time-consuming to use. Yet, some teachers find their advantages to outweigh their disadvantages because they like being able to provide students with more detailed feedback.

*Primary trait rubrics.* The primary trait scoring method (Lloyd-Jones, 1977) involves predetermining the main criterion for successful performance on a task. The “primary trait” is defined by the teacher and varies depending upon the task. This approach thus involves narrowing the criteria for judging performance on a task to one main category or dimension. As an example, consider a task that requires that a student write a persuasive letter to an editor of the school newspaper. The primary trait rubric might look something like the one in Figure 7.

**Fig. 7 Primary Trait Rubric**

<p><i>Primary Trait: Persuading an audience</i></p> <p>0 — Fails to persuade the audience.</p> <p>1 — Attempts to persuade but does not provide sufficient support.</p> <p>2 — Presents a somewhat persuasive argument but without consistent development and support.</p> <p>3 — Develops a persuasive argument that is well developed and supported.</p>
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A primary trait rubric has the advantage of allowing teachers (and students) to focus on one aspect or dimension of language performance. It is also a relatively quick and easy way to score writing or speaking performance—especially when a teacher wants to emphasize one specific aspect of that performance. Primary trait scales accompany some of the tasks in the *Handbook*, for example “Interpreting the Message of a Song.” They are better rubrics for formative assessment rather than summative assessment, because they are limited in terms of the information they provide about the student’s performance.

*Multitrait rubrics.* A multitrait approach to scoring language performance is similar to the primary trait approach but allows for rating performance on a number of dimensions (usually three or four) rather than emphasizing just one. Although similar to analytic rubrics in that several aspects are scored individually, multitrait rubrics are different in terms of the nature of the dimensions, or traits, that make up the rubric. As explained above, an analytic rubric comprises more traditional dimensions, such as content, organization, and grammar. A multitrait rubric, in contrast, involves dimensions that are more closely aligned with features of the task used to elicit language performance. For example, in an information-gap speaking task where students are asked to describe a picture in enough detail for a listener to choose it among a set of similar pictures, a multitrait rubric might be created that would include dimensions such as quality of description, fluency, and language control (see Figure 8).

**Fig. 8 Multitrait Rubric\***

	<b>Quality of description</b>	<b>Fluency</b>	<b>Language Control</b>
4	High level of accuracy in description is reflected; high degree of detail included in description.	Smooth and fluid speech; few to no hesitations; no attempts to grope for words.	Excellent control of language features; a wide range of well-chosen vocabulary; accuracy and variety of grammatical structures.
3	Good accuracy in description, though some detail might be lacking.	Speech is relatively smooth but is characterized by some hesitation and unevenness caused by rephrasing and/or groping for words.	Good language control; good range of relatively well-chosen vocabulary; some errors in grammatical structures possibly caused by attempt to include a variety.
2	Description lacks some accuracy and some critical details are missing that make it difficult for the listener to complete the task.	Speech is frequently hesitant and jerky, with some sentences left uncompleted.	Adequate language control; vocabulary range is lacking; frequent grammatical errors that do not obscure meaning; little variety in structures.
1	Description is so lacking that the listener cannot complete the task.	Speech is slow and exceedingly hesitant and strained except for short or memorized phrases; difficult to perceive continuity in utterances.	Weak language control; basic vocabulary choice with some words clearly lacking; frequent grammatical errors even in simple structures that at times obscure meaning.

**Total Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

\*adapted from scales found in Cohen (1994) and Shohamy (1985)

In this multitrait example, the maximum total score is 12. Students are assigned a score of 1–4 for each of the three categories, and these are added to create a total score. The alignment of the scale with the task is perhaps the greatest strength of the multitrait rubric; at the same time this very alignment makes a multitrait rubric less transferable for use with other tasks. In other words, it is likely that each time a different task is used, a different rubric (or at least one or two dimensions of that rubric) will have to be developed. The majority of rubrics in the *Handbook* are of the multitrait type, because they were created to align closely with the task. See, for example, the rubrics that accompany “Guess Who,” “Strategic Interaction,” “Newscast,” and “Market a Movie.”

### **Creating and Using Rubrics**

While some rubrics are created in such a way as to be generic in scope for use with any number of writing or speaking tasks, it is best to consider the task first and make sure that the rubric represents a good fit with the task and your instructional objectives. Just as a variety of task-types should be used in language classrooms, so should a variety of rubrics and checklists be used for assessing performance on those tasks. Recall that it is important to incorporate the use of rubrics gradually, however, so it is appropriate to begin with one (more generic) rubric and to add others as the reader and students become more comfortable with the process. Creating good rubrics that lend themselves well to consistent, accurate assessments takes practice. It is a good idea for teachers to begin to collect samples of rubrics that they can refer to and borrow from to develop their own. The *Handbook* contains multiple examples

of rubrics and checklists to accompany the tasks and units. These can be adapted to create new ones.

Unlike traditional forms of assessment, which often involve more objective methods of scoring and grading, performance assessments and their accompanying use of rubrics involve subjective judgments, as explained above. This subjectivity makes it more challenging to establish reliability, or consistency, in scoring and grading. Although a thorough discussion of the notion of reliability as related to the use of rubrics used for performance assessment is beyond the scope of this portion of the *Handbook*, a few pieces of advice can be offered. It is recommended that they check their own reliability in some way. For example, as students' written essays are graded, teachers can keep track of the scores on a separate sheet of paper. A few days later, the teacher randomly selects a number (e.g., five) of the essays and evaluates them again, being sure not to look at the original scores assigned. Then the teacher compares the two sets of scores to ensure that s/he assigned the same or nearly the same scores both times. If the two scores are quite different, you will need to examine the rubric carefully and re-evaluate the essays. This same procedure can be followed for checking reliability in evaluating students' oral performance as long as audio or video recordings of the performance are available. Also keep in mind that fatigue can affect a teacher's ability to score students' work consistently. It is a good idea, therefore, to limit the number of written essays or oral performances to be graded at one sitting. The more practice teachers get with the rubrics and the more comfortable they become with the process, the more reliable the scoring will become. For a detailed discussion on reliability in scoring, see, for example, Cohen (1994).

### ***Encouraging Reflection through Self-Assessment and Peer Assessment***

It has been suggested that good language learners are aware of language learning processes (e.g., Carrell, 1989; Devine, 1993; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Schmidt & Frota, 1986). They are aware of and able to reflect on their own and others' language learning strategies and progress as language learners. Reflection, as one of the concepts comprising CAPRII, has been defined above and has been emphasized as a key component of effective language instruction.

Second language students should be provided with opportunities to engage in systematic reflection on a regular basis. Reflection requires commitment, time, and the will to be open, flexible, and sensitive. People need to begin with situations that they are comfortable with and gradually build toward other more risk-taking ventures. One way to encourage reflection in students is to provide opportunities for them to assess their own language performance and that of others.

#### **Self-Assessment**

The benefits of having students assess their own progress have been established in research on first-language literacy acquisition in young children (e.g., Brown, 1988; Glazer, 1992; Graves, 1983; Routman, 1991). It is believed that opportunities for self-assessment help students to become independent learners. In addition, a number of second language studies have found that self-assessment leads to increased motivation in learners (Blanche & Merino, 1989). However, students do not learn to monitor or assess their learning on their own. Students must be taught strategies for self-monitoring and self-assessment. In the case of self-assessments, if time is not taken to instruct students in their use, their validity is questionable. Blanche and Merino (1989), in a review of sixteen studies that employed measures of self-assessment, found that among the factors that can threaten the validity of self-assessment was "the lack of common, valid criteria that both learners and instructors could use to make sound judgments" (p. 325) and learners' lack of training in how to perform the types of self-assessment that had been asked

of them. Techniques for teaching students strategies for self-assessment are parallel to those used for teaching learning strategies. Detailed descriptions of such techniques can be found, for example, in O'Malley and Chamot's book on learning strategies (1990) or Chamot et al.'s (1999) handbook on learning strategies.

Self-assessment tools can be used to encourage students' reflection on topics they have studied, vocabulary they have learned, their study habits, and their sense of their overall strengths and weaknesses. Blanche and Merino (1989) further suggest that students later share their self-assessments with a peer or in a small group, with instructions that they compare their impressions with other criteria such as test scores, teacher evaluations, and peers' opinions. This kind of practice is valuable in that it helps students to be aware of their learning; in addition, it not only informs the teacher about students' thoughts on their learning and progress, but also provides the teacher with feedback about course content and instruction.

Self-assessments can also be used to allow students to evaluate both language processes and products that are specific to the various modalities. Students can take part in assessment by evaluating their own performance (and that of their peers) on the basis of checklists and rubrics that are developed. In order to rate their own speaking performance, students would need to audio-tape or video-tape their performance and evaluate it using a rubric or checklist. Writing can easily be evaluated with rubrics. We offer examples of self-assessments in the context of a variety of tasks in the *Handbook*. See, for example, the final evaluation in the "Gender Roles" unit.

## Peer Assessment

One of the ways in which students internalize the characteristics of quality work is by evaluating the work of their peers. However, if they are to offer helpful feedback, students must have a clear understanding of what they are to look for in their peers' work. For example, when they read a peer's essay or listen to a presentation, should they focus only on grammatical accuracy? content? organization? or something else? The instructor must explain expectations clearly to them before they begin. If students are asked to give one another feedback on their essays, one way to make sure they understand what they are to evaluate is by providing students with a sample composition on an overhead and, as a group, determining what should be assessed (i.e., how does one define good writing), carrying out the assessment, and then determining how to convey clearly to the fictitious student how he or she could improve the essay.

Students also benefit from the use of rubrics or checklists to guide their assessments; these rubrics can be provided by the instructor, or once the students have more experience, they can develop them themselves. In addition to peer assessment of writing, students can also evaluate their peers' oral presentations, role plays, skits, or debates. Again, it is important that students receive guidance on what to evaluate. The use of rubrics or checklists helps students focus on the aspects that they should assess. For peer evaluation to work effectively, the learning environment in the classroom must be supportive. Students must feel comfortable and trust one another to provide honest and constructive feedback. The tasks in the *Handbook* provide a variety of opportunities and suggestions for peer assessment. The checklists that accompany the "My Favorite Recipe" task offer students the opportunity to assess listeners' and speakers' performance. Similarly, peer review guidelines such as those that accompany "Guess Who?" and "Let's go to Costa Rica" ask students to give feedback on each other's writing.

It is absolutely critical to spend time with students to prepare them for self-assessment and peer-assessment activities. Before asking students to rate their own or their peers' performance, teachers need to be sure that they understand the criteria and how to apply them. The more a teacher models and discusses the process, the more students will benefit from participating in the evaluation of their work.

## Assessing Cultural Understanding

In addition to participating in the assessment of their language performance, students need to be involved in assessing their cultural understanding and knowledge. In the *Handbook*, we have emphasized that culture needs to be at the core of language instruction. It follows that we must also devise ways of assessing students' cultural knowledge and understanding. Wiggins (1989) and others have argued quite convincingly that if we value something, we must assess it, for to neglect a concept in assessment is to communicate to students that the concept isn't important.

Kramsch (1993) has suggested that students need to learn about the multiplicity of perspectives that define cultural constructs. She argues that instead of having students simply state their interpretation of a cultural construct, they should be engaged in tasks that require them to *reflect an understanding* of a construct. For example, students have been learning about the educational system in Germany. Their task is to create a videotape about the educational system in the U.S. for a group of German students who will be on an exchange in the U.S. the following year. They are instructed to create a description of the U.S. system that reflects their understanding of what they have learned about the German system. In this way, teachers are able to tap into deeper levels of cross-cultural understanding.

Following is an example of a performance task created for college-level students of French that includes a reflection of students' understanding of the French concept of "home." The task and assessments described below are intended to be interpreted as both teacher and student assessments. In other words, the tasks are designed in such a way as to allow for teacher assessment and students' self-assessment. This description incorporates many of the techniques and ideas discussed up to this point.

Suzanne Cook, former French instructor at the U.S. Air Force Academy and Ph.D. student in Second Languages and Cultures Education at the University of Minnesota, created this assessment for a course at the University while on leave from her position at the Academy (Cook, 1994). The performance task of this summative assessment is integrative in that it combines reading comprehension, writing, and cultural understanding. Before reading a text in French, students are instructed to reflect on their background knowledge of "the French and their homes" by responding to the following questions in English. They are assured that there are no right or wrong answers.

1. Describe the image you have of a French home. What is the image based on (TV, magazines, textbooks, visit to France—where in France?, etc.)? In other words, reflect on what you believe has led you to form this image.
2. Would you characterize the French as hospitable to visitors in their home or not? Support your answer.
3. How would you describe Americans in terms of their hospitality? Feel free to use your own experience here. How does your family deal with guests in your home?

By beginning the assessment in this way, Cook communicates to students the value of using pre-reading strategies such as activating prior knowledge. She also gathers critical information that may help her understand a student's performance on the assessment. Next, students are instructed to read an excerpt from the book *Evidences Invisibles* (Carroll, 1987). They are prompted with the following:

The following excerpt comes from the book *Evidences Invisibles*, by Raymonde Carroll, a French anthropologist who is married to an American anthropologist



and who has lived in the U.S. for some 20 years. She studied the common misunderstandings between French and American people, misunderstandings that are usually due to different assumptions about how one should live and that are not explicitly considered when individuals are interacting. The following passage reveals some of the fundamental assumptions, which, according to Carroll, the French generally have about the home. Read the text carefully for understanding and with an eye for differences from your own concept of “home.”

For assessing basic comprehension, Cook asks students to respond in English to some literal-level questions about the text. She also asks that they reflect in writing “on the author of this text and the implication this might have on the information she presents, in particular on how representative it might be of the whole population of France.” By asking students to consider this inferential question, Cook attempts to tap students’ understanding that the author’s interpretation is directly related to her individual view of the world, based on her status and educational level and that the information presented may not represent all French people. She assesses students’ responses to this question with a checklist (see Figure 9).

**Fig. 9 Checklist**

Situates author as educated and/or (at least) middle class.	Yes	No
Demonstrates an understanding that information might not/does not represent all French people, or more generally that social variables affect the way people behave.	Yes	No

The basic comprehension questions and critical thinking/inferential question are followed by this performance task:

Imagine you just received the following post card from a friend who recently arrived in Lyon to spend the summer with a French family. This friend is having some difficulty understanding the ways of his/her host family. With what you’ve learned from the reading passage, write a response to your friend in French to help him/her adjust. What should s/he do differently? Include information from the text (at least 3 main ideas), in your own words, and relate it to your friend’s knowledge of the way Americans do things.

The following postcard text is presented in French, but its English translation is provided in Figure 10.

**Fig. 10 Postcard**

<p>Dear _____,</p> <p>I just arrived at the Fourniers’ house, and I seem to have begun my stay with them on the wrong foot! The family prepared a dinner to celebrate my arrival and invited some friends. I decided to help Mrs. Fournier in the kitchen, but she insisted that I leave and stay out of the kitchen. Later, I greeted some guests at the door with Mr. Fournier and was happy to help by taking the woman’s coat and putting it on the bed in Mr. and Mrs. Fournier’s room. But when I came out of the room, Mrs. Fournier had a surprised look on her face and didn’t seem very pleased. Later on, so as not to bother Mr. or Mrs. Fournier, I went into the kitchen and grabbed a beer out of the fridge. When I returned to the living room, Mr. and Mrs. Fournier seemed completely shocked. I truly cannot understand what I did to make them so angry.</p> <p>Tell me what you think. Please write soon!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Michael/Michelle</p>
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The writing portion represents an integrative task, where students are asked to link prior knowledge (of American homes and how Americans treat visitors in their homes) to new knowledge gained from the reading passage. A multitrait rubric (see Figure 11) having three categories is used to assess the students’ writing performance. Total scores may range from 3 to 12.

Several of the tasks and units in the Handbook incorporate attention to cultural issues in the assessment process. For example, the rubric that accompanies the “Newscast” task asks that students incorporate the target culture perspective in their presentations.

**Fig. 11 Multitrait Rubric**

	<b>Content</b>	<b>Cultural Sensitivity</b>	<b>Language Control</b>
4	Writing reflects thorough comprehension of the reading passage; effectively addresses the topic (is convincing to a reader); mentions a least 3 main ideas from the reading passage as support; demonstrates integration of new and prior knowledge.	Ideas expressed in the writing about the target culture avoid making judgment as to whether the target culture (e.g., France) or home culture (e.g., U.S.) is better or worse.	Excellent control of language features; a wide range of well-chosen vocabulary and appropriate register; accuracy and variety of grammatical structures; uses own words to convey ideas from the reading passage.
3	Writing reflects good comprehension of the reading passage; adequately addresses the topic; mentions at least 2 main ideas from the reading passage as support; demonstrates attempts at integration of new and prior knowledge.	Ideas expressed in the writing about the target culture generally avoid making judgment as to whether the target culture (e.g., France) or home culture (e.g., U.S.) is better or worse, though some language used might suggest judgment. Less than more judgmental.	Good language control; good range of relatively well-chosen vocabulary; appropriate register; some errors in grammatical structures possibly caused by attempt to include a variety; clear attempts to use own words to convey ideas from the reading passage.
2	Writing reflects some comprehension of the reading passage; fairly addresses the topic, though may miss some critical points; mentions at least 1 main idea from the reading passage as support; demonstrates attempts at integration of new and prior knowledge, but writing might reflect some misunderstanding.	Ideas expressed in the writing about the target culture at times seem to reflect judgment as to whether the target culture (e.g., France) or home culture (e.g., U.S.) is better or worse. More than less judgmental.	Adequate language control; vocabulary range is lacking; register may/may not be consistently appropriate. Frequent grammatical errors that do not obscure meaning; little variety in structures. Doesn't always attempt to use own words to convey ideas from reading passage (has “lifted” portions).
1	Writing does not consistently reflect comprehension of the reading passage; topic is not adequately addressed and critical points are missing; little to no support from reading passage; writing reflects some misunderstanding.	Ideas expressed in the writing about the target culture often reflect judgment as to whether the target culture (e.g., France) or home culture (e.g., U.S.) is better or worse. Very judgmental.	Weak language control; basic vocabulary choice with some words clearly lacking; frequent grammatical errors even in simple structures that at times obscure meaning. Inconsistent use of register. Consistently “lifts” large portions of reading passage rather than attempting to use own words.

## *A Final Word on Performance Assessment*

This rather lengthy discussion on performance assessment is not intended to communicate to teachers that every single classroom activity needs to be evaluated in a systematic way with a fully developed rubric or checklist. To attempt to do so would be exhausting for teachers and students and would limit opportunities for spontaneity in the classroom. Instead, this discussion is intended to help teachers understand the complexity of assessing language use and to offer them a variety of alternatives, some more complicated and extensive than others. Moreover, the time-consuming nature of performance assessments can render them inaccessible if a teacher believes that s/he must assess every student's performance on every classroom activity. In fact, teachers may find it useful at times to assess the performance of only five students or so at a given time—such an approach is particularly important in the context of oral assessment. The point is to develop an approach that works for teachers and provides constructive feedback to students. The only stipulation is that the approach incorporate assessment of language use in addition to knowledge about language. We hope that teachers find the samples in the *Handbook* helpful as they develop their approach.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The synopsis of the national standards (National Standards for Foreign Language Education Project, 1996) has been reprinted with permission from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. We encourage readers to purchase a copy of the entire Standards document from ACTFL. The expanded version, published in 1999, provides the standards as they have been modified for eight modern languages as well as the classical languages and include exciting examples of how they can be put into practice. An order form is included along with the Handbook, or copies can be ordered directly from ACTFL (see contact information in the Teachers Resources Section).
- <sup>2</sup> Portions of the section on CAPRII have been adapted or reprinted from Tedick (1996).
- <sup>3</sup> These examples of adapting a task to make it more authentic appear in Tedick and Klee (1998) and are reprinted here with permission from the Center for Applied Linguistics.
- <sup>4</sup> We have drawn much from the work of the Minnesota Articulation Project's Curriculum Team to form the foundation of a new project at CARLA entitled CoBaLTT—Content-Based Language Teaching through Technology. In this program, teachers learn the principles of content-based language instruction and the technology tools that can enhance content-based instruction. There are many lessons, developed by CoBaLTT participants, available on-line in addition to an extensive annotated bibliography about content-based instruction and other resources. Please visit at <<http://carla.acad.umn.edu/cobaltt>>.
- <sup>5</sup> Significant portions of the section on Performance Assessment have been reprinted from Tedick and Klee (1998) with permission from the Center for Applied Linguistics.
- <sup>6</sup> The Foreign Language Test Database, maintained by the National Capital Language Resource Center <<http://www.cal.org/nclrc>>, contains more than 140 tests in 63 languages. It can be found at <<http://www.cal.org/db/flt/flt-dir.htm>>.

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