Testing in the Proficiency-Oriented Curriculum:
Proficiency, Achievement, and Prochievement Testing

Benjamin Rifkin
Temple University
brifkin@temple.edu
Macro and Micro Views
Why do we test?

• Formative Assessment
• Summative Assessment
• Feedback to Students
• Feedback to Teachers
• Feedback to Program Administrators
• Feedback to Curriculum Developers
Stakeholders in Testing

- Students (and their loved ones)
- Teachers
- Program Administrators
- Textbook Authors and Publishers
- Employers
Feedback Loop

Test  Respond  Teach
Responses to Testing Data

- Reprise or revisit target material in full
- Reprise or revisit aspects of target material
- Move to next targeted material
- Revise curriculum
- Revise program
Assess what we value

Value what we assess!

Martin Smith, Edison, NJ Public Schools
Assessment & Curriculum

• Identify desired long-term objectives
• Articulate how you will know if those objectives are attained or not (what is the evidence)
• Plan instruction and select or develop curricular materials
• For excellent example, see www.flenj.org for NJ state assessment for World Languages
What Testing Means

For Students
- Anxiety
- Grades
- Stress
- Grades
- Anxiety
- Grades
- Self-Evaluation?

For Teachers: WORK
- to create test
- to prepare students
- to score test
- to counsel students
- to reflect on curriculum
- to revise test
- Self-Evaluation?
Good Testing

• Related to classroom instruction in content and form
• Provides all students to demonstrate their performance in meaningful ways in language in a variety of modalities (not gotcha!)
• Provides a unified context and integrates a variety of skills
• Provides students with meaningful feedback

With thanks to Martin Smith, Edison, NJ
Three Kinds of Tests

- Achievement
- Proficiency
- Proachievement
Achievement Test

Will this be on the chapter test?
Achievement Test (2)

- Constrained by material at hand
- Defined by instructional unit
- Clearly limited body of information
- Tasks rehearsed
- Can be graded with fine-tooth comb
- Least related to real world experience
Proficiency Test
Proficiency Test

- Unconstrained by material
- No pre-defined topics
- Unrehearsed tasks
- Holistic assessment of function
- Most closely related to real world
Prochievement Test

The play is Red-42; Smith - go deep, Jones - hook out.
Prochievement Test

• Blend of achievement and proficiency test
• Constrained by material
• Tasks rehearsed and lifelike
• Students work with new texts (not taught in class)
• Mimics real world experience
Proficiency Guidelines
National Standards

See www.actfl.org
And click publications
To download pdf
Executive summary of
National Standards or
To order 3rd edition of
volume
National Standards (2)

From nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/foreignlang/
National Standards (3)

- Modes: Interpretive, Interpersonal, Presentational
- 5 C’s: Communication, Comparisons, Cultures, Communities, Connections
- Modalities: Listening, Reading, Speaking, Writing
Washback

Unintended consequences

(May be desirable or undesirable)
Wiggins’ Criteria (1994, p. 76)

- Engaging / real problems
- Faithful representation of real contexts
- Non-routine and multi-stage tasks
- Tasks that require quality production
- Transparent assessment criteria
- Interaction between assessor and assessee (justification / follow-up)
- Response-contingent challenges
- Trained assessor judgment (oversight)
- Search for patterns of response in diverse settings
Testing Listening

- Dictation and Cloze dictation
- Draw map or fill out chart
- Answer questions or paraphrase (NL/TL)
- Write open response
- Match descriptions to listening text
- “Simon Says” (TPR)
- Outline or draw inferences
- Identify sociolinguistic factors or registers
- Listen for gist / Listen for details
Testing Reading

- Skim (Gist) / Read for details
- Answer questions, paraphrase (NL/TL)
- Write open-ended response
- Draw picture or map
- Identify salient features
- Unscramble the text
- Complete the text
- Identify purpose or function of text
- Analyze rhetoric / identify logical flaws or stylistic inconsistencies
Testing Speaking

• Answer and ask questions at lower levels
• Language functions: list, sentence, description, narration, argument, hypothesis, circumlocution
• Complex syntax and paragraph-length discourse at upper levels
• Open-ended questions to elicit appropriate discourse
Testing Speaking (2)

- Individual vs Pair or Group Assessment
- Self-Assessment (recording)
- Monologic / Dialogic / Polylogic
- Context
- Function
- Accuracy Expectations
- Picture or video prompt
Testing Writing

- Stimulus for open-ended response
- Learner choice
- Communicative focus
- Context and Purpose
- Audience
- Accuracy Expectations
- Function
- Pre-writing, revision activities
Testing Writing 2

- Communicative success
- Fulfillment of all assignment criteria
- Coherence and syntax
- Organization and internal logic
- Lexicon
- Accuracy expectations
- Originality
Testing Cultural Competence

- Demonstrate understanding of significance of cultural aspects
- Identify cultural patterns
- Model culturally appropriate behavior
- Respond appropriately to verbal and visual cues

Valette (1994, 33-35)
Testing Cultural Competence

- Scenarios with cultural challenge ("critical incident" or "cultural minidrama")
- Comparison of cultures (target / base) given a pair of texts (photos, proverbs, commercials, poems, etc.)
- Response to open-ended question about cultural problem

Testing examples from Omaggio-Hadley, Teaching Language in Context
Rubrics for Assessment

• Communicative success
• Expectations for given proficiency level
• Expectations for given instructional process
• Expectations for given students
Feedback Loop

Test

Teach

Respond
Teach - Test - Loop

- Clear and explicit learning goals
- Correlated with clear and explicit assessment criteria
- Teacher models performance
- Students perform in groups
- Students perform individually with support
- Test
- Teacher response to test
Most Importantly

• Connect small assessments (quiz, chapter test, midterm, final exam) to the larger long term goals (assessment objective)
• Make all assessments consistent in their application of assessment criteria
• Make assessment criteria public; make sure students are stakeholders
Your Questions?

Thank you!