5-2024

Evaluating the Intersection of Continuous Growth and Assessment in the Field of English as a Second Language

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ABSTRACT

Evaluating the Intersection of Continuous Growth and Assessment in the Field of English as a Second Language

by

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Master of Second Language Teaching

Utah State University, 2024

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This teaching portfolio contains a compilation of the author's personal teaching experiences and research interests while in the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program at Utah State University (USU). The sections of this portfolio highlight collaboration with current USU professors in the field of teaching English as a second language and the author's personal experiences working in a second-grade elementary school classroom as well as teaching English in a community education setting. Much of the mentioned research focuses on the subfield of second language assessment. This is an area of interest to the author as an area for personal improvement based on the author's experiences teaching in the field of English as a Second Language (ESL). The portfolio concludes with a statement on the author's future goals and plans.

(59 pages)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It would be impossible to acknowledge the entirety of those that have guided, led, and cheered me on as I have made this journey in the MSLT program. I would like to start by thanking Marie Lund and my wonderful mother for encouraging me to get a master's degree. I will forever be grateful for their faith-filled guidance and for being examples of strong women and mothers who received higher education.

I would also like to thank Ekaterina Arshavskaya for sharing her vast knowledge and experiences with me as I worked my way through the program and wrote this portfolio. Thank you as well to Ekaterina Arshavskaya, Joshua Thoms, and Sarah O'Neill for going out of your way to provide me with experiences beyond the normal scope of classwork to grow my enthusiasm for second language teaching and provide me with valuable teaching experiences. I am so grateful for the many professors that I have been blessed to learn from, not just in the MSLT program, but also in my undergraduate degree in the Elementary Education program. Thank you for sharing your passion for learning and teaching. I am also grateful for my peers in the MSLT program and all their insightful comments and experiences they have shared in class. My education would not be complete without you.

A special shoutout as well to Glauco Ortolano, who was the interim director of the English Language Center at Arkansas State University, who first introduced me to the world of Intensive English Programs (IEPs). My time volunteering in the Arkansas State IEP was what first cemented my love of languages and working with diverse student populations.

I would like to end by thanking my family and friends for their support as I have spent hours in classes and doing coursework. I am grateful for your encouragement and support. I

could not have done this without my husband Scott. His constant patience, love, and support have brought me to where I am today.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AI – Artificial Intelligence

ACTFL – American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages

CLT – Communicative Language Teaching

CSE – Community Service Experiences

ESL – English as a Second Language

IELI – Intensive English Language Institute

IELTS – International English Language Testing System

IEP – Intensive English Program

IPA – Intelligent Process Automation

L1 – First Language

L2 – Second Language

LOA – Learning-Oriented Assessment

MSLT – Master of Second Language Teaching

OPI – Oral Proficiency Interview

SLA – Second Language Acquisition

TSE – Test of Spoken English

TESOL – Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

TOEFL – Test of English as a Foreign Language

U.S. – United States

USU – Utah State University

INTRODUCTION TO THE PORTFOLIO

This portfolio is a compilation of my experiences during my time at Utah State University (USU) in the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program. These experiences comprise practical applications, current theories, and recent research in the field of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). My four years in the program have taught me much in regards to the importance of using current research to guide the pedagogical choices teachers make and ways in which these theories can be applied in real classroom settings.

My background in teaching ESL comes from a slightly unorthodox place. I have spent time volunteering in ESL classes and as a classroom assistant, but it was not until partway through the MSLT program that I was able to teach my own ESL class through a community education center. The majority of my time in education has been spent in elementary school settings. My undergraduate degree is in elementary education, and I have spent over five years working in classrooms (four of these years were spent as a classroom teacher). I have spent almost the entirety of my time in low-income schools with class populations that are ethnically diverse and language rich. I have reflected often on the intersection of knowledge I have gained from these experiences, as well as my time in the MSLT program, and my experiences teaching ESL.

This portfolio will highlight the intersection of the questions and struggles I have had during this learning journey as well as the successes and takeaways that have been a product of my time in the MSLT program. This portfolio contains first my teaching philosophy which focuses on assessment, rigorous and clear learning objectives, and the Communicative Language Teaching approach. The second document is my Hands-On Teaching Experience which describes my experience using service and community learning in a collaborative effort between

the elementary school and the Intensive English Language Institute (IELI) at USU. The third document is a reflection of my time teaching community education ESL. In this paper, I reflect on common challenges surrounding assessment and how to overcome these in a practical application. The final document included in this portfolio will be a Statement of Future Goals and Plans.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Professional Environment

The MSLT program has done many things for me, but one of them is opening doors to the many available contexts in which one can teach ESL. My teaching philosophy is catered to adults learning English in the U.S. Outside of my time teaching 2nd grade, I have spent time volunteering and working in different Intensive English Programs (IEPs) in the university setting. These IEPs are where I first decided that I wanted to teach ESL. My aim in getting my masters is to teach at the university level. Since starting the program, I have learned about many different contexts including teaching English abroad, public school systems, and community education. During my time in the MSLT program, I was able to get experience teaching at the English Language Center in Cache Valley. This experience taught me many powerful lessons and has greatly influenced my teaching philosophy. The exact target audience for my teaching philosophy will be intentionally left vague as I could see myself working in either a community or university setting. This being said, the target audience is adults learning English in the U.S.

Teaching Philosophy Statement

One of the most intriguing things to me about being a teacher is the opportunity one has to constantly grow and improve. There are always ways to better your curricula and classroom management, deepen your understanding of the English language, and discover new research to reflect best practice. And when you think you have it down, you will for certain have a new set of students that require something more than you currently possess. As I have dived into this improvement continuum, I have found the following three aspects of teaching most valuable in helping me as a teacher to improve and for my students to succeed in learning English. First, as a teacher, I value assessments. It is very important for teaching teams to carefully select assessments that effectively serve them and their students. Second, as a teacher, I value rigorous and clear

learning objectives. Students do their best when they have a clear vision of what they are learning and ample opportunity to practice and problem solve. Third, as a teacher, I value the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach (Savignon, 2002). Allotting a large amount of classroom time to authentic speaking opportunities is research-backed and highly motivational for students.

Assessments and Data-Driven Decisions

The world of teaching is slowly starting to put more of a focus on formative assessments and steer away from an emphasis on summative assessments (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). While summative assessments have their place in a student's learning journey, they are not as useful to teachers. Formative assessments are tools that can be used to find out what students know and do not yet know. This is a valuable form of feedback where teachers assess how effective their teaching is and what still needs to be taught in class. Hattie and Waack (2018) compiled over 2,103 meta-analyses using over 132,000 studies of ‘factors related to student achievement’. The average effect size (i.e., effect on student achievement) was 0.4, leaving anything above to be considered positive growth. This study lists ‘Evaluation and Reflection’ with an effect size of .75 and 'Feedback' with an effect size of .70. When assessments are used in these ways, they can be powerful tools for student growth. Assessments shouldn’t be an end to student learning, but a question: What now?.

In my classroom, my teaching and student learning is driven by assessment. After assessments are carefully chosen and administered, data is used to ask questions like: What can I do to better teach the curriculum?; What do my students know and where will we move from here?; What things need to be taught again and how will they be taught differently?. When tests are returned to students, they are given in the form of feedback. This feedback is usually done via a conversation or written note. Students also contribute to this evaluative conversation as they take charge of their own learning.

Clear and Rigorous Learning Objectives

Clear and rigorous learning objectives are essential to students' success in the classroom and hold teachers accountable for teaching all of the curriculum. Students that know learning objectives can articulate what they are learning and why. “It also acts as academic self-management that allows students to bring control over their learning and eventually promote academic achievement” (Senjahari et al., 2021, p. 495). “When learning objectives are used correctly, they can increase academics and student motivation” (Althoff et al., 2007, p. 58). In fact, “setting clear goal intentions” are so helpful that they have an effect size of .48 on Hattie and Waacke’s Updated List of Factors Related to Student Achievement (2018). Part of effective learning objectives is making sure that they are posted and verbally shared with students at the beginning of each lesson. Students should be given the opportunity to self-evaluate their progress at the end of the lesson and ask themselves what skills they still need to gain to meet these objectives. Learning objectives should also be rigorous. This ensures for students and teachers that what is being taught daily in class will allow students to meet/exceed the course objectives overall. Students need consistent practice with the skills they are working towards. Jackson (2011) suggests that, “Rigorous instruction asks students to create their own meaning, integrate skills into process and use what they have learned to solve real world problems, even when the “correct” answer is unclear and they are faced with perplexing unknowns” (p. 15).

As a new teacher in both the elementary school and community ESL settings, I have seen the importance of setting rigorous learning objectives. This can only be done as teachers take the time to carefully map out what will be taught each class period of a course and provide as many practical opportunities for application as possible. In my classroom, I try to include the learning objective at the beginning of each lesson and then give students opportunities to share where they are at with this learning objective. I find it is very important to work with a team of teachers to ensure that our

curriculum is rigorous and adequately prepares students for the next level of coursework as well as for real-world application.

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach that allows students to engage in real, meaningful activities as they learn a language and better prepares them for authentic interactions in their second language (L2) (Savignon, 2002). In the late 60's and early 70's, there was a push for reform in the language teaching world. The current instruction was lacking in social terms, intercultural interactions, and ways to get across meaning (see Savignon, 2002). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach that answered this call and is centered not on grammar, but practicing communication through tasks and activities. The goal should be to help students get across a message while negotiating meaning – usually practiced in student-to-student interactions. Bill VanPatten, an advocate of CLT, called these tasks the 'quintessential event' of classroom learning and that all tasks should have a 'communicative purpose'. He further adds that, "Tasks involve the expressions and interpretation of meaning. Tasks have a purpose that is not language practice" (VanPatten, 2017, p. 106). This requires careful consideration by teachers when deciding what tasks are appropriate for classroom use. Bax (2003) talks about the importance of also catering these tasks and activities to individual classroom contexts and students' specific "learning needs, wants, and strategies" (Bax, 2003, p. 285). I think it is very important for teachers to keep in mind how their students plan to use the L2 and their students' personal interests as they plan classroom activities.

I hope to teach in a college ESL setting. Keeping this context in mind means that the activities I choose will include many elements of traditional classrooms in the U.S. to prepare my students for these same types of activities in their general education classrooms. Some of these include discussions, projects, and community involvement. These three things allow for negotiation

of meaning and communicative purpose while also giving students a taste of what it is like to live in an American city and attend an American university.

I hope to create a culture of classroom discussions. This is very typical in U.S. classrooms and might not be something that my students are familiar with. Not only will this give my students practice in negotiating meaning, but it will also allow them to learn group discussion pragmatics. My classroom will have many group projects, which will allow students to negotiate meaning as they create a presentation, poster, brochure, or skit to show what they have learned. I also love including community involvement in my classroom activities. In a college setting, this could look like my students interacting with peer volunteers, other university staff, and/or community members. In a college setting, this also might look like assignments given to my students to interact with/interview local members of the community or opportunities to volunteer at campus or community events. I strongly believe that these communicative tasks will better prepare my students to succeed in their general education classrooms as well as become contributing members of their local community.

Conclusion

As mentioned above, my ultimate goal as a teacher is to constantly improve and better my practice. As I implement the three teaching practices mentioned above: Frequent Assessments, Clear: frequent assessments, clear and rigorous learning objectives, and communicative language teaching, it will take time and a lot of critical analysis to perfect them and cater them directly to the needs of my students. There is no greater joy in teaching than improving one's own trade and seeing their students benefit from it as they become richer users of the English language and more prepared to contribute to their communities. During my time teaching 2nd grade, community adult English education, and college intensive English language classrooms, I have seen my students directly benefit from the three aforementioned principles.

HANDS-ON TEACHING EXPERIENCE

In Fall of 2022, I took a culture and second language teaching class from Professor Arshavskaya. It was in this class that I was introduced to the concept of service and community learning. I felt very lucky to take this class from Professor Arshavskaya as this is a huge strength of hers. She often involves guest speakers from the university to share ideas with her classes and engages her own ESL classes in activities around and off of campus. This was inspiring to me and something that I value for my own personal classroom. I am in a unique situation right now where I am currently in the MSLT program but also teaching in a regular general education classroom. This concept of service and community learning inspired me to reach out to Professor Arshavskaya and ask if her ESL class would be interested in coming and doing presentations in my elementary school classroom. It was a fun experience for all involved and we have since coordinated two other similar events. They have been wonderful opportunities for my elementary students to have interactions with students in higher education and to meet people from new cultures. The final time that we arranged an event, I was able to be more a part of the planning and teaching processes in the ESL classroom. I gained valuable insights into how teachers prepare ESL students for oral presentations and how to evaluate these students' performances to help them grow and improve.

Service and community learning are gaining popularity in the world of teaching English as a second language. What is service and community learning? An oft-cited definition comes from Jacoby (1996), who describes service-learning as "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities designed to promote student learning and development" (Jacoby, 1996, p. 5). For students that are new to the United States, the need for service and community

learning is very important (Russell, 2007, p. 770). Schneider (2018) mentions the importance that service and community learning can have for those that teach these students as they “see language learners in relation to the larger social world” (Schneider, 2018, p. 3). Russell (2007) addresses the common problem with international students who spend the majority of their time with other international students and spend little time with 'mainstream' students or others in the community where they are located (Russell, 2007, p. 770). This gives students less time to interact with native speakers and gain valuable experiences in English language settings. Service and community learning can help provide contexts in which students can make friends with 'mainstream' students and community members as they create priceless language experiences.

Service and community learning can also help students academically. Experiential Learning Theory expounded by Kolb (1984) identifies “experience and discovery as key elements required for learning” (Kolb, 1984 as cited in Chandrasoma, 2021, p. 130). Chandrasoma continues to say that, “students can in a broader context of society apply their experiential knowledge gained from CSE [community service experiences] beyond the classroom” (Chandrasoma, 2021, p. 126). This sentiment was also supported by Russell (2007, p. 770) whose class created and raised money to print an English phrasebook that was available for free to members of the large local Hispanic community. Russell (2007) said that these types of experiences created student-centered learning environments and students that were willing to take initiatives in choosing their own projects to take on.

For this particular visit in my classroom, ESL students were prepared as they picked a topic that interested them and that they knew a lot about, but would also be interesting to elementary school children. From there, they made an outline, presented it to their classmates (the class was very small), and got feedback. Since one of my areas of interest is assessment, I

also provided a rubric that they could preview that evaluated their oral presentations (see Appendix A for details). This rubric was based on the one from Brown and Abeywickrama (2010, p. 219, p. 207). Students were given ample time to practice in and outside of class, then I came to class to view their presentations and used the rubric to give them more feedback. Students then came to my elementary school classroom to give their presentations to the students. Afterwards, they were asked to write a reflection on the experience.

This was a low-anxiety and high-motivation experience for the ESL students. While they expressed a lot of nervousness in their practice presentations, they did a fantastic job when it came time to present and they seemed to enjoy working with the kids. Children are a wonderful audience to present to as they tend to be more forgiving and easier to please. The topics the two students picked were also things they were very interested in. I think this is really important to encourage students to become 'experts' in the vocabulary and language needed to talk about things that are interesting to them. The language is more applicable to their personal lives and can help them to make friends and be more confident expressing their specific interests.

I was really grateful for the opportunity to work with these students on giving oral presentations. This is an important part of an ESL student's foundation if they are to be successful in American universities. It was a great opportunity to put into practice some of the things that I have been learning about assessment. While there are many forms of speaking assessments, oral presentation is a common assessment used by ESL teachers and it is important for me to get practice administering this kind of assessment.

Looking back, there are a couple of things I would do differently going forward in my own ESL classroom. The biggest of these is changing the rubric format. While I was pleased with my general rubric content, it was very hard to listen to the students present and to take notes

on all the different aspects of their presentations simultaneously. I felt rushed and sloppy in the gathering of my data. While I fully believe that part of this comes from lack of practice, and that I will get better with time, it also makes me wonder how I could better design the rubric to make the grading efficient and fast. The other concern I had was that I wanted to be able to hand students a paper with feedback right away for them to take back and study, but I also wanted to be able to take personal notes that I could use later as a teacher. It felt that some of my notes were not necessary for the students to see but helpful for me; others were less helpful for me but good for the students as feedback. This is something to consider in design change as well.

In the future, I do plan to use service and community learning in my classroom. Giving presentations is just the start of ways I can get my students involved in the community while also working to meet their course objectives. I would love to develop/collaborate on a more set working curriculum between ESL teachers and elementary school teachers. This would allow us as teachers to become better at evaluation of student performance and to refine our curriculum alignment. I would also love to provide students opportunities to have reading buddies and other service-oriented learning experiences. While there are still many things that I have to learn in the areas of oral presentation assessment and service and community learning, I feel confident and excited that it is something I can implement in my own classroom and that I can encourage others to do as well.

MAIN PAPER

Reflection Paper on The Evaluation and Assessment of Second Language (L2) Speaking Proficiency Throughout an IEP Course

Introduction

In the Spring of 2022, after two years in the MSLT program I had, as of yet, had no formal experience teaching ESL. With the help of one of my professors, I was able to get a position over the summer with a community education program that teaches English. I spent my first class observing another teacher teach on Zoom and then took over the class at the end while she took her maternity leave. All the major groundwork that goes into setting up a class was done by her. The layout of the class schedule, the routines, the general environment, the "grading" (I put quotation marks because nothing was formally graded until the end, when an evaluation was done by her of whether or not the students moved on to the next level), and class retention were all done by her, even after she left. While this was a wonderful opportunity to "get my hands dirty," it did not prepare me for the next class that I would teach on my own.

The next class I taught was an in-person beginning-level high school English course with about five to six students consistently attending. The course met two nights a week for three hours each time. The course also used the textbook "Ventures" (Bitterlin et al., 2018) for classwork and homework. I enjoyed the course and learned a lot as I began to practice the things I had learned in my program. At the end of the semester, I was asked to give each student an evaluation. Each student and I were to meet one-on-one during our class time and I was to give them feedback on what they did well, what they could still work on, and if they were ready to progress to the next class level. As I sat preparing for these evaluation interviews, I realized with horror and disappointment, that I had no data on which to base these decisions. Unlike a university setting where it is expected to have graded assignments, students' assignments in this

setting were solely optional, and the work done in class was not turned in. In order to prepare for the interview, the only thing I had to go off of was a gut feeling of what I had seen them do in class and the standard set by the workload expected in the next level.

While I was able to fumble through these evaluations, I was left with a realization of something very important I had left out of my course: assessment. While I am getting my masters, I am also teaching second grade full-time at an elementary school. I still work with students learning English, but the application of the things I am learning in my program is very different in this setting, as my teaching objectives are in subject matter, with English as a means to an end. In that setting, I use informal and formal assessment almost daily. Students are given learning objectives and then assessed to see if they meet these objectives. Not only are the students aware of where they stand in their progress of these goals, but those that do not are given extra time and practice to reach these goals. By the end of the year, it is very clear whether a student has or has not accomplished what is expected of them. While some of these assessments are provided by the state or district, many are created as a grade-level team and evaluated in this same team setting.

It was strange for me to realize how large of a disconnect there was between my two professional teaching settings. In one, I was using formal and informal assessments almost daily and relying on the data from these assessments to make instructional decisions throughout the course. In the other, I had completely left out this piece of the puzzle and suffered from it in the end. This experience left me with a yearning desire to figure out how to best use assessment in the L2 classroom.

In the MSLT program, something that I have learned is the importance of relying on research backing to inform your teaching methods. While I had done a lot of research on

informal assessment (oral corrective feedback) during my time in the program, I had next to no research knowledge on how to give formal assessments. It was at this time that I set out to learn all I could on what current research says about L2 assessment including: how assessments and learning objectives interact, what problems L2 educators face in giving assessment, and what type of assessments should be given.

As with most things in life, addressing how to use assessment in the L2 classroom is complicated. Assessments should always be used in correlation with the course learning objectives as well as what is practiced in the L2 classroom (Tennant, 2007). This being said, every L2 course or educational setting has slightly different goals and expected outcomes. This means that each course will have different assessment needs as well. Because I would like to teach in a university setting, this paper will look at L2 assessment through the lens of a college-level intensive English language learning classroom setting.

Objectives and Assessment Used Together as a Growth and Learning Tool

This section of my paper will talk about the research I have found on the benefits of aligning classroom learning objectives with classroom assessments. This is something that is talked about often in the world of elementary education, but I have not heard it mentioned very often in the world of teaching ESL. The research below is organized first into the benefits of aligning learning objectives with assessment and then covers the more practical ways in which this alignment should be accomplished.

Benefits of Curriculum Alignment

The alignment of learning objectives and assessments will be referred to in this paper as "curriculum alignment" as used by Wotring et al. (2021) and many others. Finney (2002) states, "Linking expected class outcomes and assessments to performance objectives can afford students

with clear goals, transparent evaluation criteria, and accountability in course selections". Wotring suggests that this alignment of curriculum is the key to innovation in teaching (Wotring, 2021, p. 58). While classroom objectives and assessments are both powerful tools on their own, they are even more powerful together. I have seen this to be true in my own teaching in the elementary school classroom. When you teach something and then assess to find that students have not yet adequately learned what was taught, it forces you as a teacher to reevaluate what you need to change to reach these learning targets. This often involves classroom innovation.

A good teacher that practices curriculum alignment will find that they get more feedback for themselves of how they are doing as a teacher. They will make many adjustments to their teaching strategies to help their students come away with greater knowledge gains. This happens as teachers evaluate how their objectives align with their assessments and what is missing to close the gap between the two (see Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 22). In the book *Seven Myths About Education,*" Daisy Christodoulou says that teachers should adjust teaching based on assessment. She says, "teachers [need] to be 'thermostats, not thermometers' – not just taking a measurement of where a student is, but making changes depending on where they need to be" (Christodoulou, 2014; King, 1963). This means that teachers use assessments as a tool to find the gaps in learning that students still have based on the course objectives. Teachers ask themselves the question: "What do students still not know? What skills still need to be strengthened? How can I reteach these skills in a different way to make them more salient to the learners?" These are powerful questions.

In a large ongoing meta-analysis that addresses the factors that effect a child's academic growth, Hattie (2023) notes that teacher clarity has an effect size of .85. Under this study: "Teacher clarity relates to organization, explanation, examples and guided practice, and

assessment of student learning. It can involve clearly communicating the learning intentions of the lessons and the success criteria" (Hattie, 2023, p. 5). To put this effect size into perspective, Hattie calculated the average effect size of a student's learning to be 0.4. The effect size of teacher clarity is almost double this. Teachers that use curriculum alignment (and share their learning objectives and growth tools with their students) will have students that achieve larger growth than those that do not. In addition to this, assessment in itself can also aid in the reinforcement and retention of information (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 22). As a classroom, teacher clarity is accomplished in a couple of ways. First, learning objectives should be clearly stated in the syllabus. This gives students perspective on where the course will take them. Second, current learning objectives are clearly stated multiple times each class period as the subjects are being addressed. This can look like a teacher reminding students of the learning objective they will be learning about at the beginning of class and then at the end of class, giving students time to reflect on if this standard was met and what more students need to do to reach this goal. Learning objectives should also be clearly stated as teachers introduce future assessments, so students know exactly what they will be tested on and why.

Not only can curriculum alignment help students achieve higher growth, it can also help students become self-regulated learners. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010, p. 22) believe that assessment can increase student motivation by giving them periodic milestones of their progress and closure to modules as the class moves onto the next. It also "promote[s] student autonomy by encouraging students' self-evaluation of their progress" (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 22; see also Kumar et al., 2023). All of these factors influence students' motivation for self-regulated learning. "Self-regulated learning is essential for lifelong learning because it allows students to construct knowledge by identifying their learning goals, self-managing their learning

process and self-evaluating their performance against goals" (Xiao & Yang, 2019, p. 39). As teachers use assessments as a way that students can view their own growth and decide what steps they need to take next in their learning journey, students will become lifelong learners. Students are not only taught material, but are also taught how to learn material when at first they don't succeed. This evaluative process is the sign of a self-regulated learner (see Vygotsky, 1987). A study performed by Xiao and Yang (2019) with English language learners had instructors put emphasis on growth from assessment data. In the end, "the students perceived the classroom formative assessment activities that they experienced and the feedback they received to be helpful in the development of their deep understanding and capability for self-regulation in English language learning" (Xiao & Yang, 2019, p. 39). We can help our students become lifelong learners as we guide them to see the value of assessment data in their learning journey.

Another name for this emphasis is Learner-Oriented Assessment (LOA). It "integrates assessment into learning by capitalizing on students' learning in all assessment practices" (Mok, 2012, p. 29). While others may consider assessment a separate part of a course, the theory of LOA considers it a fundamental part of a student's learning process (Derakhshan & Ghiasvand, 2022, p. 3). If the goal of our classroom objectives is for students to walk away with new knowledge learned, our job as teachers should be to focus all classroom activities on these targets. Not only should the assessments help teachers reflect on students' learning, it should help students to be centered on this acquisition of knowledge as well. The goal of assessment is not to complete tests, but to show to oneself that they have made knowledge gains. If they have not, this becomes a period of self-reflection. "In practice, LOA builds feedback loops into learning to enhance the quality of students' learning" (Carless, 2015, p. 9). This practice, as coined by Derakhshan and Ghiasvand, helps learners to set goals for themselves and to "confirm

areas of strength and to pinpoint areas that need further work" (see Brown & Abeywickrama 2010, p. 22).

So far, we have seen the importance of curriculum alignment. Curriculum alignment benefits both teachers and students. For teachers, it becomes a tool that helps them adjust their teaching to better help students meet the class objectives. For students, it can help them achieve higher learning gains, motivate students to become self-regulated learners, and create an environment focused on growth achieved through goal setting and self-evaluation. Since the topic of this paper is the evaluation of speaking assessments in particular, the question then remains: how does one set appropriate learning objectives for speaking skills? How do these skills change as students progress through a program? And last, how does one use assessment in accordance with speaking objectives?

Types of Speaking Learning Objectives

As we have established that learning objectives are important, it is now our task to decide what objectives should be used to structure our course. What do we expect students to be able to do as they speak? The book *Language Assessment Principle and Classroom* Practices (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010) offers a wealth of possible speaking objectives that cover the vast range of skills necessary to speak English. These possible speaking objectives are derived from three different testing rubrics. One of the many resources is a "taxonomy of skills from which you can select one or several that become the objective(s) of an assessment task" (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 185). These skills are broken up into micro and macro skills (see Table 1 below, based on page 186). These skills break down what it takes to be able to speak a foreign language. These could easily be broken up into standards and objectives based on different topic units or students' speech gains as a whole throughout the course of the class. An example of this

would be to take skill 13: “Use appropriate styles, registers, implicature, redundancies, pragmatic conventions, conversion rules, floor-keeping and -yielding, interrupting, and other sociolinguistic features in face-to-face conversations" and then teach a unit on how to use these skills in formal classroom discussions. To assess this objective, students would participate in a class discussion and be graded using a rubric that breaks down the above-mentioned skills.

Table 1

Micro- and macroskills of oral production (based on Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 186)

Microskills[1]

1. Produce differences among English phonemes and allophones
2. Produce chunks of language of different lengths
3. Produce English stress patterns, words in stressed and unstressed positions, rhythmic structure, and intonation contours
4. Produce reduced forms of words and phrases
5. Use an adequate number of lexical units (words) to accomplish pragmatic purposes.
6. Produce fluent speech at different rates of delivery
7. Monitor one’s own oral production and use various strategic devices– pauses, fillers, self-corrections, backtracking–to enhance the clarity of the message
8. Use grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization), word order, patterns, rules, and elliptical forms
9. Produce speech in natural constituents: in appropriate phrases, pause groups, breath groups, and sentence constituents
10. Express a particular meaning in different grammatical forms
11. Use cohesive devices in spoken discourse

Macroskills

12. Appropriately accomplish communicative functions according to situations, participants, and goals

13. Use appropriate styles, registers, implicature, redundancies, pragmatic conventions, conversion rules, floor-keeping and -yielding, interrupting, and other sociolinguistic features in face-to-face conversations

14. Convey links and connections between events and communicate such information and give information, generalization and exemplification

15. Convery facial features, kinesics, body language, and other nonverbal cues along with verbal language

[1] By microskills, we mean the small segments of language that include “phonemes, morphemes, words, collocations, and phrasal units” (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 185). By macroskills, we mean how a speaker accomplishes bigger ideas such as “fluency, discourse, function, style, cohesion, nonverbal communication, and strategic options” (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 185).

16. Develop and use a battery of speaking strategies, such as emphasizing key words, rephrasing, providing a context for interpreting the meaning of words, appealing for help, and accurately assessing how well your interlocutor is understanding you.

Another helpful way to think about forming objectives is to focus on the different generalized categories of spoken language. The ACTFL (American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages) OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview) speaking assessment uses a rubric that gives students a rating 1-5 in the following areas: "grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, pronunciation, and task." Using this rubric to create learning objectives would ensure that students are developing their ability to speak English in a well-rounded way that focuses learning on all aspects of L2 speaking. It also provides instructors with a specific, well-thought-out guide to evaluate students' progress within the learning objectives (see Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 212-13). The only downside to this scale is that it covers a large range of growth that would take place over the span of many years, not just one course. This being said, it could still be adapted to a smaller scale to meet the needs of course objectives. This could be done by picking and choosing one set of objectives from the OPI in lieu of a bigger scope and sequence

Another example of a preexisting set of course objectives comes from the Test of Spoken English (TSE) scoring guide (1995) as mentioned by Brown & Abeywickrama (2010, p. 206). The rating system for the TSE is slightly different from the previously mentioned objectives in that its rating system gives only an average score of general ability in many different sub qualifications. While this poses some general problems in giving students an accurate score in the realm of testing, these sub qualifications could easily be used to help create further clarity in a set of learning objectives. The subcategories are as follows (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 206):

- Functions performed clearly and effectively
- Appropriate response to audience/situation
- Coherent with effective use of cohesive devices
- Almost always accurate pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and vocabulary

Each speaking test could use all or a handful of these subcategories in a specific way. For instance, a roleplay where one student is a patient and another is a doctor and the patient is describing symptoms, a learning objective could be, "I can respond using the appropriate use of social respect" to meet the objective above: "Appropriate response to audience/situation".

The three above mentioned testing rubrics give teachers a fantastic place to start when creating a set of course learning objectives. They also could help provide clarity to current standards that teachers are using and provide feedback on if one's learning objectives are covering the full range of what it takes to speak the English language. While they are not an end all, they provide a place to start in aligning one's learning objectives and assessments.

Scope and Sequence of Learning Objectives over the Course of a Program

Another important part of curriculum alignment is looking at the bigger picture of a student's learning trajectory throughout their time in an English program (see Cobb, 2004; García & Beltrán, 2003; Mercuri et al., 2002). One could have a wonderful set of learning objectives that align with the course assessments, but if they overlap too much with adjacent courses, students will not achieve enough growth and might become bored. If the learning objectives do not overlap at all, students might end up with learning gaps, become frustrated, or not be capable of meeting course objectives. The responsibility of looking at curriculum alignment should fall on administration and individual teachers. When course objectives are adequately aligned as students move up in a program, students can achieve their greatest growth

potential. Just like teachers should evaluate student growth with learning objectives and assessments, programs should also look at students' overall growth and find places to make improvements. Individual teachers should also make a point to know what students learned in the previous classes and what they will be expected to learn in the next. This will help teachers to create learning objectives and assessments that truly meet students where they are at and push them to make more than adequate learning gains.

An example of this comes from the IEP at USU. Their speaking curriculum progression throughout the student's time in the program starts with students focusing solely on formal/informal speaking interactions (levels 1 and 2). In their third level, student objectives focus on formal/informal communications in and out of university settings, but also include understanding how to communicate in group work in academic settings. The fourth level has students focusing solely on academic presentations (Utah State University, 2023). Within the details of their learning objectives, you can see the carefully planned progress of student ability throughout the student's learning journey. This is something that can and should be done with greater attention to detail in all existing college language programs.

Practical Application of Learning Objective Aligned Assessment

As mentioned by (Llosa, 2012, p.332), "individual student growth has not been a focus in language testing. Most large-scale language tests (e.g., [Test of English as a Foreign Language] (TOEFL) [and International English Language Testing System] (IELTS)) are typically taken once to determine a student's level of language proficiency at a particular point in time." These tests are not often repeated or looked at point to point to find growth. They are often the entrance exam to a university and not thought of much more. While these assessments have their place in the academic world, they do nothing to document or evaluate student growth. This is often not

done course to course either. Each teacher's assessments are so different that no real growth is monitored over the span of a student's time in a program. An answer to this lack of cohesive program growth assessments could be to create an oral interview that students take at the end of each semester or school year. This would allow the program and the students to monitor their growth in speaking. Another important step is for programs to work together to create progressive sets of learning objectives that build off of one another. While this problem should predominately be evaluated at a program level, teachers can help students monitor their growth within their own course. It often seems that the assessment format of classes is to teach a unit, give a test on the material, and then move on. The only time this material is reassessed is during a formative final exam. This "one and done" format does not help relay the importance of information that is being learned to students. It also does not help teachers account for students' long-term memory loss or what was not adequately learned the first time around. This is why Llosa (2012) suggests progress monitoring. "Monitoring progress is also important in the classroom context, as a reliable assessment of progress can inform teacher instruction and appropriate interventions" (Llosa, 2012, p.332). When teachers use progress monitoring to assess where students are at in meeting the learning objectives, they not only relay to students the importance of the objectives being assessed, but also give teachers adequate time to intervene whole class or with individual students before they move on to the next unit. It can also help students see growth throughout the semester and therefore provide students with more motivation.

As students receive progress monitoring in the form of formal and informal assessments, teachers can also implement feedback loops. This can be structured differently depending on classroom needs, but it allows teachers to give students information on how they can better meet

the learning objectives and gives them time to reflect on how they wish to do this. Feedback loops, as a part of LOA, are said to "feed forward by prompting student engagement and action" (Carless, 2007, p. 65).

Wrapping It Up

All of these strategies help learners and teachers to link the powerful connection between learning objectives and assessment. This curriculum alignment provides students with motivation, increases learning classroom learning gains, and provides teachers and students with important information on how to be successful in the process of learning the English language. As teachers analyze assessment data, they can find ways that they can improve as teachers. As students analyze assessment data, they become life-time learners and a vital part of their own learning process. Curriculum alignment is a process that takes time, precision, and constant reevaluation. Teachers should take the time necessary to make sure their learning objectives are clear and align with their course assessments.

Challenges

In the last section, we talked about the importance of aligning class learning objectives with assessments, but this is much easier said than done. The ACTFL OPI, as mentioned above, has six main categories of language learning that are all of importance for students to learn and for teachers to assess (Brown, 2001, pp. 406-407). With limited time, it may be difficult to assess all of these things in just one course. An example of just how complicated this can be is found in the book *Vocabulary in Language Teaching* (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020). It lists 18 different skills that can be assessed just under the category of vocabulary alone (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020, p. 33). This makes it hard for teachers to decide what to assess students on. With sub categories in each main category, there are endless options. Teachers will have to decide what is most

important for them to assess in their specific course. Teachers might also struggle to manage the time it takes to assess each student's speaking during limited class time. They might also struggle with problems such as knowing if it is wise to use assistive technology to grade assessments or to risk complications with a power struggle dynamic/potential bias by grading exams on their own. Teachers may also struggle to separate the skills of speaking and listening or speaking and reading as students need some form of input to produce the intended output and meet objectives. These problems will be discussed in detail below as well as possible solutions one might use to mitigate these problems or lessen their effect.

The Pros and Cons of Technology in Administering Speaking Assessment

As one begins to look at the challenges of creating and administering speaking assessments, it helps to know what has been tried in the past and what is successfully being used today. For example, for a long time speaking and writing assessments focused more on indirect activities (or responding to questions about language). Now there is a movement to take a direct method in testing (or requiring learners to actually 'do' language) (see Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 21). Assessing speaking in large-scale assessments was costly and unreliable. "Now, with advances in discourse analysis, better accounting of examiner-examinee interactions, improved rubrics, and technology-enhanced scoring, the testing industry is taking on the challenge of direct assessment" (Taylor, 2004 as cited in Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 21). While it is now common to see speaking assessments in the language classroom that require learners to 'do' language, it is still a challenge for common teachers to score these with fidelity or to use technology to aid in this process outside of recording conversations for later scoring.

These "advances in discourse analysis...and technology-enhanced scoring" are most commonly found in large scale English proficiency tests such as TOEFL, OPI, or Versant. These

popular tests have ample research backing, paid/trained examiners, and access to new technology. This means that while it is easier for common teachers to assess speaking than in the past, there is still a gap in the resources available to common teachers for assessing speaking skills. Hopefully, in the future, some of these technology-based resources will be more easily accessible to the general public. There has been an increase in possibilities since the creation of artificial intelligence (AI). A recent article (2023) written by Youn gives some examples of how AI could potentially be used. “For instance, L2 learners themselves can become interviewers asking a series of questions to IPAs [intelligent processing automatons] and elicit responses by asking follow-up questions. Through this, evidence that reflects the ability to ask relevant questions and retrieve information from IPAs can be elicited” (Jung Youn, 2023, p. 57). This is a valuable tool as most assessments in the form of interviews require the professor to ask questions and the student to answer them. Youn also suggests the use of Google Assistant. He suggests that the interviewing process involves a close analysis. Google translate will do automatic transcription and while Youn says that sometimes it is not always perfectly accurate and needs to be checked, it can help teachers and learners, “instantly retrieve and diagnose their own discourse” (Jung Youn, 2023, p. 57). This tool is a fantastic way for teachers to save time during the grading process, but also to give students an easy way to analyze their own speaking ability. This is something that has not commonly been done in the past but could be a powerful learning tool for students. It should be stated that while this tool has potential to increase student’s own meta-cognition of their speaking patterns, it also has a long way to go before it is an accurate tool and can fully be trusted by teachers and students.

As mentioned above, one of the many reasons that we have been able to focus more on “doing language” in assessment vs. indirect language tasks is the assistance of technology. There

are many benefits to using technology in assessments, but also many challenges. The benefits include:

- Time saving if students can be assessed all at once vs. one by one
- Time saving if tests can be graded by a computer vs. by hand
- Takes out the influence of a power relationship on test results
- The reliability of computer functions in grading

Versant is one test that shows the amazing ability of technology to help produce reliability in a test. It "has students repeat sentences to a voice recognition system. It is a surprisingly accurate indicator of not only phonological ability, but also for discourse and overall oral production ability. It is also scored by a computer and has high correlation with the human scored tests. It gives you results in minutes" (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 188). While not all large-scale assessments use technology (see Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p 216-18) its use seems to have positive effects. It does seem that some people value human scored tests over computed scored tests. One example of this is the TOEFL test. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010, p. 19) share that most large-scale computer tests have "fixed, closed-ended responses," but that the TOEFL test now has a written essay section and an "oral production section" that are scored by people. This can be helpful to show a part of a student's abilities that are not usually showcased. It does seem that in many instances, without cutting-edge technology, computer-based tests are limited to these "fixed, closed-ended responses," This is one of the biggest challenges of using technology with assessments. Teachers trying to assess speech are often looking for answers that lend themselves to an almost unlimited number of responses that would be difficult to quantify. Luckily, technology that can assess these open-ended questions is becoming more accessible to students and teachers (see *Duolingo English Test Walkthrough*

2023: test overview with all question types, 2023, Gutiérrez-Porlán et al., 2022). Despite these challenges that exist, it seems that there are many benefits to using technology to aid in creating and administering assessments and that there will only be more in the future. In the meantime, I plan to use an integrated approach. The majority of my testing will be done in person, but I will experiment with technology like Google Assistant to see what improves students' testing experience and what does not.

Time Constraints

As mentioned above, there are many factors to consider when giving assessments. One of these is time. While reading, listening, and writing tests can easily be given to a whole class, speaking tests, outside of complicated and costly new technology, are often given one-on-one. This can become a burden for professors and take large amounts of time to test every student. The following are a list of potential ways to alleviate this problem. First, professors can always delegate this responsibility to others. While they will miss out on the rich feedback, they personally receive from interacting with students one-on-one, professors can use classroom aids or advanced-level students to help administer these speaking assessments. With proper training, clear expectations, and insightful rubrics, professors can still glean vital information from these speaking assessments to make instructional decisions and students can still use feedback as a learning tool.

Two other possible solutions come from Tennant (2007) who suggests to have students work on another assignment while you are testing or to have a sheet with each student's name and to assess one or two students a day on speaking to get through all students once or twice a semester. These ideas allow professors to assess one-on-one while still being effective with limited classroom learning time.

During my time working in community English learning, the textbook we used had a large amount of information gap activities. It would have been easy to make a grading sheet for each student and then each time in class commit to listening to one pair while recording feedback on performance. This would be valuable information for me and for my students as to where we are in the learning process.

Power Struggle

Another challenge that arises with one-on-one speaking assessment is the effect of a power relationship. Power relationships can have a negative effect on the "quality of oral production...The interviewer (the teacher, in a classroom context) needs to be aware of the power relationship that underlies the interview and do whatever possible to put the test-taker at ease, to lower his or her anxiety, and to draw out optimal performance" (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 211). These power relationships can be represented by a professor and student or by a specialized examiner (like those that administer the OPI) and an examinee (see Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, pp. 216-218).

While computer-delivered speaking tests are one solution to this problem, an easier solution is to always include a warm-up activity as part of each speaking test. This can include "yes/no questions or factual questions that are easily answered to put the interviewee at ease" (Kitao & Kitao, 1996, p. 5). This allows the speaker time to get more comfortable before they begin the targeted/scored part of the assessment. Another solution that has some obvious downsides, but could also mirror real life situations, is testing two students at once. This approach would help lessen the effects of the power relationship with the interviewer on speaking performance. It would also help the professor with the time it takes to assess a full class. While this solution addresses many problems, it also comes with its own challenges.

Brown and Abeywickrama (2010, p. 211) add that it is "harder for the Interviewer to score and keep up. It can also create problems if the students are not equal speakers in terms of conversation balance. BUT it can also be a great way to have students interact with someone other than the professor" (emphasis in original). While it is socially impossible to remove the power relationship that a professor and student have, these solutions offer suggestions that lighten their effect on testing performance.

Challenges with Isolating Speaking Assessment Objectives

One of the last challenges I wish to mention is the difficulty of isolating assessment of speech. "Part of the problem with speaking assessment is that unless it is a long dialogue or speech, the speaker's output will always be tainted by the aural intake of the interviewer. Is what they are hearing accurate? Is what they are responding to the examinee an accurate response to what they said? It is hard to separate speaking and listening" (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 183, 187). The same sentiment is carried by Kitao and Kitao (1996): "speaking appropriately depends, in part, on comprehending - spoken input. This necessarily becomes a factor in the testing of speaking, and it is difficult to know whether you are testing purely speaking or speaking and listening together" (p. 2). We have already shown the importance of aligning learning objectives and assessment. The challenge of isolating speaking and assessment and its input counterpart (listening or reading) assessment can be difficult. This could be demonstrated by a student that has strong speaking skills but weak listening skills. This student might hear one thing that an interviewer says and interpret it as another. If their response appropriately addresses the question they thought they heard, it will sound strange to the interviewer. The interviewer now has to make a decision: Did the speaker say the wrong thing because they do not know how to get across their message and need more practice speaking, or do they understand how to get

the message across, but just misunderstood the interviewer's question and need more listening practice? While all classes should contain all four language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing; there could be valuable information for a teacher that notices that the majority of their students did not understand the prompt and can find a way to improve student vocabulary or listening comprehension skills.

There are some very simple and convenient ways to address this challenge. The first is the use of picture-cued responses. These can reduce the amount of the listening comprehension needed to respond to prompts, as pictures are a universal language. "Pictures are shown to the test-taker to initiate either one-word responses or more complicated answers. The test giver can also ask the test taker questions based on the pictures" (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, see p. 193 for examples). This format of speaking can assess anywhere from the simplest forms of spoken language to full blown storytelling monologues. Another simple instructional strategy that can be used in picture-cued storytelling is giving very specific instructions. To ensure that your students respond in a way that meets the learning objective criteria, simply make the learning objective criteria clear. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) add: "If you are eliciting specific grammatical or discourse features, you might add to the directions specific instructions such as 'Tell the story that these pictures describe. Use the past tense of verbs.' Your criteria for scoring need to make clear what it is you are hoping to assess" (p. 221). I find that scripting these types of directions is preferable as it ensures that all students receive the criteria in a uniform way.

Another way to help solve this challenge is to make sure that your tests are similar to classroom tasks that have already been completed. This ensures that students are familiar with the assessment tasks and can focus solely on the objectives being tested. This idea is backed by

Tennant (2007) who suggests that you should assess things only in ways that have been used in class activities prior and that students should know these criteria before testing. Brown and Abeywickrama also suggest using written prompts instead of verbal prompts. They reason that written responses provide a little more time for the tester to answer the question and remove misunderstandings due to listening skill gaps. In theory, they help “to unlock the almost ubiquitous link between listening and speaking performance" (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p 193). While this practice does not mirror real-life language use, it can help assure students understand the prompt clearly enough to respond appropriately.

While the above suggestions offer many solutions to the problem of isolating speaking and listening skills, I feel that the biggest challenge is that of making sure teachers are aware of this conflict of interest and working to make sense of data despite it. Teachers should be very aware of not only what they are assessing, but what other skills students need to properly answer assessment prompts and what strategies are available to them to bridge these gaps.

Types of Assessments

As has been mentioned previously, “More educators and advocates for educational reform are arguing for a de-emphasis of large-scale standardized tests in favor of contextualized, communicative, performance-based assessment that will better facilitate learning in our schools" (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 19). This section will focus on the different types of speaking assessments that are out there and the practical application of how they can be used in the classroom setting. One will notice that all the activities mentioned have focused on a task at hand and less on the metacognitive ability to describe language patterns and rules. The interest that professors have today is what their students can do *with* language, not necessarily what they know *about* language.

There are many different categories that have been used to group types of speaking assessment. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) in their book *Language Assessment Principles and Classroom Practices* categorize assessment types into five categories based on length and student involvement. The categories are imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive, and extensive (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 184-185). The TSE test uses discourse types to categorize their assessments. Lazaraton and Wagner (1996) categorized 15 speaking tasks. Some of these were narration, description, summary, giving instructions, comparing and contrasting, etc. (see Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 205).

For the sake of this paper, I would like to examine different types of practical speaking assessments that could be catered to specific classroom use under the framework of Brown and Abeywickrama's five categories of speaking assessment: imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive, and extensive. Each of these categories will be examined and defined, then practical examples will be offered. While all five areas have value, one will find from the examples given that most professors tend to use only the final three categories for speaking assessment.

Imitative Assessment

The first category mentioned by Brown and Abeywickrama (2010, p. 187-189) is imitative. The definition of imitative, as used by Colle (2023a, para. 2) is: "The competence assessed is that of purely phonetic, prosodic, lexical, and grammatical (pronunciation)". Focus on imitative language use was the prominent piece of the Audiolingual Method and today is often shunned. There is research though that shows the important role that imitative language can play in helping a student sound comprehensible when they speak (see Bakar & Abdullah, 2015; Vinther, 2002). Vinther (2002, p. 54) agrees that it is useful, "as long as it is applied with great care." This means that an occasional lesson or test of a person's pronunciation is helpful as long

as it is not the main focus. An example of an imitative assessment would be having the examinee repeat words or sentences you say to check for proper tone and pronunciation (see Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 187; Colle, 2023a).

Intensive Assessment

The second category of assessment is intensive assessment (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 189-201). This assessment is defined as using small segments of speaking at a certain language level. It should be no more than a sentence in most instances (see Colle, 2023a). Intensive assessments also contain short fragments of language use and, as such, also have some criticism. Colle (2023a, para. 6) shares that this type of assessment may have an illogical flow and might only be helpful to assess micro-skills that can easily be performed in a short time. This can still provide very useful information for teachers. If used as a tool to find out where students are at using a particular micro skill, it could be helpful information in the middle of a unit and provide guidance on what teachers should focus on in instruction. The following are some practical ways to use intensive assessment.

One possible option is translation. Students are given either a written or oral word, phrase, or sentence in their first language (L1) and asked to translate it into the L2 (see Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 20; Colle, 2023a). Another is to read a script or passage. This type of learning task/assessment is shown to improve students' pronunciation of L2 vocabulary (Nurani & Rosyada, 2015). While both of these are simple assessments, the two that seem most applicable in the L2 classroom are picture-cued tasks and sentence/dialogue completion tasks (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 192-200; Colle, 2023a).

In a university intensive English language classroom, there is very rarely a common L1. This makes any efforts to control test results by means of L1 use next to impossible. Mushtaq et

al. (2021, p. 1093) states: “Pictures are the most convenient mode to adopt.” Pictures are almost universal. This makes picture-cued tasks and picture-cued storytelling (to be explained later) both popular choices for language assessment. Mushtaq also states: “Besides describing positions, location, comparison and order of events, a picture that [has] detailed information to discuss may be used to elicit the competence of test takers in telling directions, a plan and even opinions (2021, p. 1093). Brown and Abeywickrama (2010, p. 194-200) have fantastic examples of picture-cued tasks. These tasks are endless and can include anything from two pictures of different chairs and a prompt to: “Use a comparative form to compare these objects.” or a picture of a family bundled at the airport and thinking about the warm places they are going in thought bubbles (see Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 194-198). Questions are asked such as: “Where are they going for their vacation?” (points to the dad) “What will he do in Hawaii? (points to mom) “What will she do there?”. These activities can also be directional activities where a participant looks at a map and is asked questions like: “Please give me directions to the bank.” and “How do I get to the post office?”

Sentence/dialogue completion tests are also a wonderful way to glean information as a teacher on where students are at with respect to meeting learning objectives. Students have time to look over a conversation in which one person's words have been taken out. When they are done looking over it, they will go through the dialogue with the professor reading the written lines and the student responding to the empty gaps. While this particular kind of assessment has its limitations, it can also be a great learning tool for students (see Labben, 2022). Labben (2022) specifically mentions its usefulness in assessing student’s pragmatics ability. While many of the mentioned assessment activities are common testing formats in the L2 classroom, it is a good reminder that an assessment should never be the first time that a student sees the specific testing

format. Giving students adequate time to become familiar with testing formats via classroom activities/exposure ensures that you test the students' spoken language abilities and not their ability to adapt to new learning tasks. It also helps if you as a teacher make sure you are teaching to learning objectives. This is not to say that the learning activity should be the only kind given, but should at least be familiar to students.

Responsive Assessment

The third category of assessment is responsive assessment (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 201-207). According to Mushtaq (2021, p. 1093), “These types of tasks are the tasks in which small dialogues are used as well as reaction or response to spoken prompts such as requests, comments and simple greetings, etc.” There are many similarities between responsive and intensive assessment. The main difference is that intensive tends to be a sentence or less while responsive assessments require multiple sentences to complete the given task.

Many of the examples given are fairly similar to those in the previous section. Responsive assessments can be answering questions, giving directions, describing pictures, objects, or characters, giving instructions, or retelling a story or event (Verner, 2022). The final is very popular in the language classroom. It can be done using picture-cued story telling or on its own as a response to a prompt. “Just like the limited version, the main concern of using pictures or the series of pictures at this level is to make it a stimulus for purpose to produce longer stories. For this, a series of six pictures with an appropriate amount of details about the setting and the character will be adequate to test” (Mushtaq et al., 2021, p. 1094). Teachers can also ask extended questions to elicit further response, if needed. It is especially important with picture-cued testing for students to understand what criteria will be graded prior so they know what to focus on when speaking.

Interactive Assessment

The next category mentioned by Brown and Abeywickrama (2010, p. 207-218) is interactive assessment. This is the type of assessment most commonly used to assess oral proficiency. It is two or more people interacting with one another using oral language (see Sandlund et al., 2016, p. 16). It is also one of the most common forms of real-life oral language use: conversations with others. Where this is often our goal for our students to be able to talk with others in one form or the other, this is a very important type of assessment to include in our courses. While traditionally one thinks of an "oral interview" when they think of interactive assessment, there are many other ideas mentioned below to assess student oral proficiency.

Before these are discussed, we will talk about how to use an oral interview as an assessment tool. One of the biggest challenges to oral interviews, as mentioned earlier, is the amount of time they take to complete. One of the ways to alleviate this burden, as used by Dr. Sarah O'Neill, a Spanish teacher at USU, is to use teacher's assistants, higher-level students, or community volunteers as interviewers (Johnson & O'Neill, personal communication, October 14, 2023). These can be done as formal midterms or final assessments or they can be done more regularly at the end of each chapter. At the end of each chapter, students could be given a prompt, a list of grammar, and allowed a small sheet of notes of what they wish to talk about (Johnson & O'Neill, personal communication, October 14, 2023). When done this way, students do not necessarily need to be given a grade other than completion. While this is slightly more informal, it still gives the students the opportunity to practice what they have learned with other English speakers and afterwards reflect (with a formal assignment, if wanted) on how they are doing in producing spoken language. Informal or formal interviews such as these can function as

milestones for students in their learning journey and provide students and professors with valuable information of what growth still needs to take place.

An oral interview should include a warm-up, a level check, a probe, and a wind-down. The warm-up is small talk that gets the examinee comfortable. The level check is a check to see where the examinee is at in regards to what has been taught in class (where they should be). This can include answers to wh-questions, narratives, reading a passage aloud, telling how to make or do something, or small roleplays. Probes are to push an examinee to see what potential they truly have. This could be open-ended questions on random topics, an examinee's field of study, or roleplays with potentially awkward circumstances. The last piece is a wind-down where the examinee is asked how they felt about the interview and told how they did (see Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 208; Onal, 2022).

Something to be aware of as the interviewer asks these questions is what your objectives are. Many speakers of an L2, when asked a question, will stick to the part of the topic they feel most comfortable with. If this is not the place that the interviewer wanted the examinee to go, it could be frustrating to constantly try to bring the conversation back around. While it can be hard to make sure you collect adequate data on the intended outcomes, it can also be an opportunity for your examinee to show that they can continue a smooth conversation even if they do not know about a suggested topic, which is very much applicable to real life (see Sandlund et al., 2016). Common things to include on a rubric for interviews or other assessments are: accuracy in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, sociolinguistic/pragmatic appropriateness, task accomplishment, and comprehension (see Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 207).

While oral interviews are the most popular form of interactive assessment, there are many other kinds. The following assessments are not as common, but slightly better for time

management and also power dynamics. One of these are group discussions (Colle, 2023b). “There has been a growing trend towards the assessment of peer performance on interactional tasks. This has been buttressed by findings by Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research on facilitative effects of peer interactions on L2 learning” (Issacs, 2016, p. 9). Sandlund et al., (2016, p. 16) examines how topics are introduced and negotiated: “Peer-group discussions force the candidates to relate to each other in the ongoing interaction, to monitor the ongoing talk, and to identify the assessment task agenda. In other words, group settings might provide test-takers with opportunities to demonstrate ‘real-life’ interactional abilities.” Discussions bring something to the table that many other assessments do not. If done correctly, these can assess real-life scenarios that might take place in work environments or social gatherings. Some things that could be assessed are “topic nomination, maintenance, and termination, attention getting, interrupting, floor holding, control, clarifying, questioning, paraphrasing, comprehension signals, negotiation of meaning, intonation patterns for pragmatic effect, kinesics, eye contact, proxemics, body language, politeness, formality, and other sociolinguistic factors” (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 215).

The last type of interactive assessment that could be used is drama-like tasks (Colle, 2023a). These tasks offer students opportunities to practice real-life skills. One of these is improvisation. “Improvisation gives the test-takers minimal opportunity to prepare the situation and may incite creativity in using the language” (Colle, 2023a, para. 20). Drama-like assessments can also include simulation where students are given a real-life task and asked to act out what would happen in real life to complete the task. An example of this would be buying a train ticket (Colle, 2023a). One student is the customer and another student (or the teacher) is the train station ticket salesman.

Extended Assessment

The last category mentioned by Brown and Abeywickrama (2010, p. 218-221) is extended assessment. Extended assessments are monologues that relate to real-life situations such as telling stories or giving work related proposals. Whereas before it was suggested that students should have done similar activities prior to being tested in this manner (Tennant, 2007), this is not often the case with extended assessment. The only prior practice that seems practical for this particular assessment form is teacher examples or "rough draft" presentations where students are "pre-graded" and given feedback to improve before doing a final presentation and getting a final grade.

Oral presentations are one of the most common forms of extended assessment. These can prepare students not only for future jobs, but, more relevantly, for their future college classes. According to Pervaiz, there are five different types of oral presentations: providing information, teaching a skill, reporting progress, selling a product or service, and solving a problem (Pervaiz et al., 2022, p. 2). All of these kinds could easily be used in the classroom and *delivery* with would serve different purposes for the students learning. Not only are there many different types of oral presentations, there are also many different kinds of rubrics to grade these presentations. There are many good examples of oral presentation rubrics available (see Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 219; Pervaiz et al., 2022, p. 6-7; Vercellotti & McCormick, 2021).

Another form of extended assessment is picture-cued story telling. This is a type of assessment that can fit into many different categories. In extended assessment could be used as a way to sufficiently test vocabulary, time relatives, past tense irregular verbs or general fluency (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 221). An example of this would be a series of six images with a detailed story apparent from the pictures. Students then tell you what is happening in the

story in a predetermined tense. This allows the examiner to pick up on what vocabulary the student knows and doesn't know and what grammar the student has not yet picked up on. It can also give indications if the student knows how to use transition words that are commonly used in narratives. Studies show the powerful effect that picture-cued storytelling can have on fluency, grammar and accuracy, pronunciation, and class participation (Karimzade et al., 2021; Lavalle & Briesmaster, 2017).

While oral presentations and picture-cued storytelling are the most common form of extended assessment, there are many other ways to use extended assessment as well. Students could be asked to read a news article or story and then retell the events (Colle, 2023a). The only problem with this form of assessment is that listening or reading skills will be heavily intertwined. Newer forms of extended assessment include vlogs and podcasts (Colle, 2023b). These have great potential to engage students in learning and provide students with adequate practice with oral discourse.

Many Assessments in Application

As one can see from the list above, the possibilities when it comes to assessment formats are almost endless! As teachers choose the assessments that will be used in their classes, they should keep in mind that variety is good and allows students many different opportunities to show off their L2 speaking abilities. These assessments should not be new to students. When students are familiar with the format of assessments, it allows them to focus on the content they are using and less on the format of delivery. It can also serve as a way for students to see the growth they have made from practice to formal assessment.

Moving Forward

One of the things that I value most about being an educator is the constant opportunities there are for improvement. In the field of teaching English as a second language, I have a lot of growing to do. One of the areas that has stuck out to me as a place for immediate improvement is assessment. While I wish to improve my ability to use L2 assessment in general, I specifically want to improve in how I use speaking assessments.

Moving forward, I plan to take more time to analyze current course objectives and rewrite them in student-friendly language. These objectives will be clear and specific, but encompass the learning that will happen on a day-to-day basis. As I analyze these objectives, I will take the time to carefully create/pair assessments that truly test the intended targets and provide me, as an educator, and my students with valuable data. I also wish to build into each intended assessment a form of reflection and transparency for students to be heavily involved in their own learning journey. All of this information will be presented in a clear syllabus for students to refer to. Lastly, I hope that if my situation allows, this analysis can take place in a team of other educators. From my time in the field of elementary education, I have found that there is great value in making these building blocks with a team. When they are created and evaluated by teachers all on their own, they can become hard to track and even harder to evaluate without prejudice. When learning objectives and assessments are constantly evaluated as a team, they become more powerful and intentional. As this becomes a team discussion, I hope to evaluate often the rigor behind my learning targets and if my daily activities are helping students achieve these rigorous goals.

As mentioned above, there are many challenges that come with L2 speaking assessments. To help mitigate the effects of these, I hope to evaluate the effectiveness of my assessments often

and question ways that they can better serve me and my students. I will work to overcome the challenges of assessment through the use of technology when it is beneficial for me and my students. An example of this is using Google Assistant for transcribing interviews. I plan to give a wide variety of assessments, some formal and some informal. To help students feel comfortable during the majority of speaking tests and for the sake of time management, I would like to do many speaking assessments using a format similar to the one mentioned on page 29 of this paper by Tennant (2007) where a simple scoring sheet is made for small in-class speaking practices and each class a couple of pairs of students are evaluated on how they are meeting the unit objectives.

I will also become proficient in a variety of assessment types as a test administrator. I currently have used a handful of activity types in class, but I have not been able to use these as assessments. I want to try a wide variety of assessments to know what types of assessment best meet the needs of my students and to understand how they function and what they bring to the table. I will incorporate more picture-cued story-telling, oral presentations, information gaps, drama-like tasks, and other fun projects including games, vlogs, and podcasts. Many of these assessments will take place as end-of-unit projects to provide the students with a sense of closure and a way for them to show what they know.

As I continue this journey as an educator of ESL students, I will surely refine my practice and find new questions and problems surrounding L2 speaking assessment. There are some things that can only be learned from doing and some questions that only become apparent when a plan is in action. I look forward to discovering these new questions and, in turn, further bettering my practice and the learning experience I am able to provide my future students.

STATEMENT OF FUTURE GOALS AND PLANS

As was mentioned at the beginning of this portfolio, teaching is a profession in which one can constantly grow and learn. This is one of the main reasons I have chosen to work in education. There is something exciting about the possibility of continuous improvement. This improvement comes in many ways and facets. As mentioned in my main paper, teachers can constantly evaluate through learning objectives and assessment where they can make improvements to better help their students grow and improve in their teaching trade. The students we teach also constantly change as time goes on and so does the technology and research available to the field of second language teaching.

As I continue forward, I hope to work in a university setting with international students learning English. I would also consider positions working in community education serving underserved populations or work abroad teaching English as a foreign language. No matter where I end up teaching, there are three goals I wish to achieve. The first is to rely on heavy collaboration with those in the profession around me. There is no better way to improve as a teacher than to receive mentorship from those with more experience and those who stay up-to-date on current research. This is one of the reasons I would like to work in a university setting. The university setting provides ample opportunities to work side by side with other experienced teachers who value improvement and current research in the field of ESL and other applicable fields to teaching. This goal also includes attending conferences and other knowledge-based symposiums to gain further insight into best teaching practice. These might include things like Intermountain TESOL or webinars like the free assessment courses through the Assessment and Evaluation Language Resource Center at the Center for Applied Linguistics. Second, I plan to heavily collaborate with those in the community around me. I firmly believe that a community is

stronger when they value each other's strengths. I plan to do this in the way of community and service learning. If I end up teaching community education, I will also use it as a way to recruit and gain volunteers. The more we connect as a community, the more we learn and grow from each other. I also include in this my desire to collaborate with university personnel in publishing short reports, papers, and research in the field. My final goal is to constantly question best practice through the means of learning objectives and assessment. I believe that this questioning is so important to achieve growth and development as individuals and societies.

As I work to collaborate with colleagues, my community, and to question best practice through learning objectives and assessment, I hope to be successful in any teaching job I find myself in in the future. The field of second language education is a flourishing field that I am grateful to be a small part of. During my time in the MSLT program, I have come to know and appreciate not just the application of great teaching practice, but the research that goes on behind it. I look forward to applying the things I have learned in this program as I go forward with my teaching career.

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APPENDIX A

Oral Presentation Rubric			
3- Excellent	2 - Good	1 - Fair	0 - Poor
Objective			**Score**
Presenter clearly introduces themselves by sharing their name, country they are from, language they speak, what they are studying, and what they will be presenting about.			
Presenter uses correct vocabulary to share information about their topic.			
Presenter uses transition words appropriately. (Examples: first, second, then, next, last, finally, etc)			
Presenter asks audience one appropriate question during the presentation.			
Presenter responds appropriately to audience questions at the end.			
Presenter uses appropriate non-verbal communication. (Examples: Does not read off of slides, faces audience, keeps hands out of pockets, etc)			
Presentation lasts 3-5 minutes..			
Notes			**Overall Score**

Figure A1. I designed this rubric for a collaboration with IELI and my elementary school classroom.