

LOTE CED *Lowdown*

April 1999

Volume 2.1

Languages Other Than English Center for Educator Development

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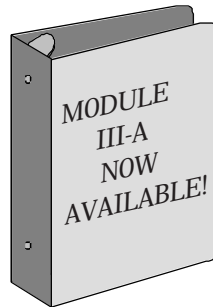
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LOTE CED Training



Module III-A TEKS for LOTE: *Addressing Assessment*

Provides practice in developing performance-based assessment tasks geared to the TEKS for LOTE and rubrics used to evaluate students' performance.

Descriptions of TEKS for LOTE Modules I (Overview) and II (Classroom Implementation) can be found on page 11.

Workshops on the TEKS for LOTE are being facilitated by a group of highly qualified and experienced language educators, many of whom were involved in the development of the TEKS for LOTE. Arrangements for the workshops are being made by the Education Service Centers (ESCs) and some Independent School Districts (ISDs). Contact the TEKS liaison at your ESC or the language coordinator at your ISD to find out about workshops in your area. (For ESC phone numbers, see page 7.) □

PEER COACHING AND MENTORING PROJECT

Training in peer coaching and mentoring that is geared specifically to teachers of LOTE will soon be available through the LOTE CED. Ten LOTE teachers from around the state have learned techniques for implementing peer coaching and mentoring models of professional development. After two intensive training-of-trainers sessions in Austin this past fall, the ten teachers returned to their districts to hone the skills they learned and further develop their own training skills. This spring, the ten trainers will train other language teachers in their districts in peer coaching and mentoring; they will also be available to train in other school districts in their area and at the two Education Service Centers nearest their districts.

For more information about this project, please contact the LOTE CED. □

Upcoming Conferences

Southwest Conference on Language Teaching

April 8-10, 1999
Reno, NV

Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

April 8-11, 1999
New York City, NY

Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

April 15-18, 1999
Little Rock, AR

Texas Conference on Coordinating Languages

May 3-4, 1999
Austin, TX

American Classical League

June 25-27, 1999
Oxford, OH

American Association of Teachers of French

July 11-14, 1999
St. Louis, MO

National Junior Classical League

August 1-6, 1999
Tallahassee, FL

American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese

July 30-August 3, 1999
Denver, CO

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages; American Association of Teachers of German

November 19-21, 1999
Dallas, TX

Focus On Guiding Principle 2: Student Variables

*The publication **A Texas Framework for Languages Other Than English** is based upon a set of Guiding Principles, or key statements about the teaching and learning of languages other than English. These Guiding Principles are supported by language education research and experience. They also are based on a strong commitment to the importance of languages as part of all students' educational program in Texas schools. There are eight Guiding Principles in all and subsequent issues of the **LOTE CED Lowdown** will take an in-depth look at each of them. This issue focuses on Guiding Principle 2: **Multiple Student Variables Affect How Students Acquire Languages.***

First language acquisition and further language acquisition follow similar patterns.

When children learn their native language, they construct that language in the real world. They use the language to convey particular meaning and for specific purposes. Similarly, acquiring a new language involves using previously acquired language skills within a context of meaningful and purposeful communication (Omaggio, 1993). Whether a preschooler, teen, or adult, students of all ages must internalize a language's components (such as its sound system, basic lexicon, and grammatical structures). In addition, language learners must have many opportunities to practice the language so as to develop effective communication strategies and culturally appropriate ways of interacting in the new language. The fact that the process of acquiring additional languages is similar to that for acquiring one's first language affirms the belief that all students can learn languages. And still, it is critical to recognize that students vary on a variety of variables and that the instructional process must take these variables into consideration.

The age and developmental stage of the learner is one variable that affects language acquisition.

Elementary students can acquire language by actively listening and participating in real and meaningful contexts such as storytelling, hands-on presentations using science or mathematics or social studies content, interactive songs, and children's games. Young learners should use their

TEKS FOR LOTE ON-LINE

You can find the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Languages Other Than English (TEKS for LOTE) on-line at

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/teks/114toc.htm>



new language in conversations about topics that interest them. Reading and writing should support and reinforce what was learned in listening and speaking activities. To develop language skills, early elementary students rarely need explicit instruction in syntax (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

Multiple intelligences and individual learning styles play a role in how students acquire language. As students mature, their individual learning styles emerge. For example, auditory learners acquire language best by listening to oral presentations, music, and tapes. Visual learners benefit from pictures, diagrams, models, maps, and the written word. Those who learn kinesthetically are aided by movement—for example through dancing and role-playing—thus connecting language to movement. Most students, however, learn and retain knowledge best through a combination of learning styles and intelligences (Gardner, 1993).

Prior knowledge and experience with language and content also influence how students learn in language classrooms.

All students bring some type of language experience to the language learning classroom. While the language studied may be the native language for some students, for others, it could be their first experience with a language other than English. Some students enter LOTE programs with well-developed listening and speaking skills in the target language that can become the foundation for literacy in that language. They will build upon the native language skills they bring and benefit from opportunities for further development in the skill areas of reading and writing. Other students will be developing native and second language skills at the same time.

Finally, there are emotional and affective factors that influence language acquisition.

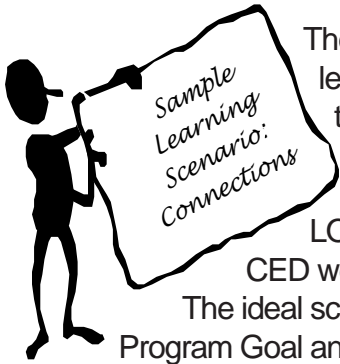
Students' motivation, self-confidence, and level of anxiety can have an impact on how they learn languages. Students are motivated when the content is meaningful and purposeful. They are more apt to practice language when they feel comfortable, are free to make the mistakes necessary for gaining language skills, and are encouraged to take the risks necessary to create meaning in another language (Krashen, 1995; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991).

Students who are identified as learning disabled because of difficulties in areas such as storing, processing, or producing linguistic information often experience challenges in learning languages. Reading and writing will present difficulties for students with certain types of learning disabilities such as dyslexia or language-based learning disabilities (LLD). Teachers need to be alert to adaptations needed so that students with these difficulties can show what they *do* know and *can* do. Different forms of assessment may be necessary. □

Some Variables Affecting Language Acquisition	Corresponding Instructional Strategies
Age and developmental stage	Choose age-appropriate experiences, topics, contexts, materials.
Diverse learning styles	Employ various instructional strategies, including auditory, visual, and kinesthetic techniques.
Prior general knowledge	Build on knowledge and past experiences.
Prior linguistic knowledge	Provide multiple points of entry into language programs; choose activities where students can demonstrate various levels of proficiency.
Emotional and affective factors	Create classroom environments where students are motivated and feel comfortable taking risks and making mistakes necessary for acquiring language.
Learning disabilities	Use approaches that allow these students to be successfully included in the language learning experience, e.g., approaches that use and have students employ a combination of skills.

Table: Teacher Strategies for Student Variables

Sample Learning Scenarios Solicited



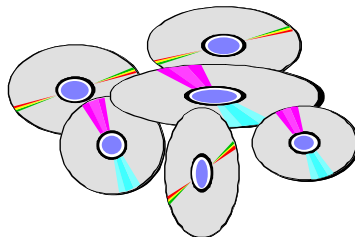
The LOTE CED seeks your help in developing learning scenarios and technology-based activities that illustrate the new state standards, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Languages Other Than English (TEKS for LOTE). Select activities will appear on the LOTE CED web page and may be published in print format.

The ideal scenario/activity combines the *Communication* Program Goal and at least one other Program Goal (i.e., *Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities*). We are seeking activities that emphasize contextualized language use, authentic materials, and student-centered learning and which provide for the creative use of the target language. Sample scenarios and submittal forms are available upon request from the Center, (800) 476-6861 ext. 290, and may also be accessed on-line at <http://www.sedl.org/loteced/teks.html>. Take this opportunity to share your ideas with language teachers around the state! □

LOTE CED Seeks Technology Application Reviews

Incorporating technology into the language classroom is an important goal in the new state standards for foreign languages, the TEKS for LOTE. Therefore, the LOTE CED is seeking your help in acquainting language teachers with the latest materials available for this purpose. The LOTE CED invites you to share information about technology applications you have recently used in your classes: audio and video tapes, CD-ROM, laser disks, computer programs, etc. If you are interested, please provide us with the following information (via snail- or e-mail) or fill out a form on-line at our web site: <http://www.sedl.org/loteced/technology.html>

- Your name and contact information, school district/campus, language and level
- Name and type of technology application (CD-ROM; computer software, etc.)
- Publisher and approximate cost
- Focus/purpose (structured practice? listening comprehension? vocabulary development? etc.)
- Topics covered (family life, specific grammatical structures, etc.)
- How students responded
- Perceived strengths and weakness of the software



Please note that the LOTE CED is unable to accept reviews from authors or publishers of these or similar technology applications. □

ERIC REVIEW ON K-12 FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION NOW AVAILABLE

The latest edition of the ERIC Review (Volume 6, Number 1, November 1998) focuses on foreign language education in the United States. Articles in the issue cover topics from Kindergarten through Grade 12, highlighting the importance of knowing more than one language.

Lead articles examine current trends and challenges in the field of foreign language education and the many benefits of second language learning. Shorter pieces cover topics such as program models, national standards, student assessment, professional development of teachers, uses of technology for foreign language teaching, and job opportunities for foreign language speakers. Guidelines for establishing and maintaining a foreign language program are presented along with lists of resource organizations and tips for searching the ERIC database.

For a free copy of this publication, call ACCESS ERIC at 1-800-LET ERIC, send an e-mail message to acceric@inet.ed.gov, or send your request in writing to: ACCESS ERIC, 2277 Research Boulevard, Suite 7A, Rockville, MD 20850. □

The above was excerpted from an article in the CAL Reporter (No.11, October 1998), a publication of the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington D.C.

TEKS for LOTE Spotlight: Cultures

This issue of the LOTE CED *Lowdown* spotlights an activity focused on **Cultures**. The following sample scenario is designed for intermediate-level speakers. Adaptations for novice- and advanced-level learners are suggested; teachers should be able to tailor the activity to the language and culture(s) they teach.

TEKS for LOTE Knowledge and Skills

The student gains knowledge and understanding of other cultures.

TEKS for LOTE Performance Expectations

Novice

The student is expected to demonstrate an understanding of the products (what people create) and how they are related to the perspectives (how people perceive things) of the cultures studied.

Intermediate

The student is expected to use the language at the intermediate proficiency level to demonstrate an understanding of the products (what people create) and how they are related to the perspectives (how people perceive things) of the cultures studied.

Advanced

The student is expected to use the language at the advanced proficiency level to demonstrate an understanding of the products (what people create) and how they are related to the perspectives (how people perceive things) of the cultures studied.

Learning Snapshot

IMAGES IN ADVERTISING

Objective: By examining and comparing examples of magazine advertisements from their own and the target culture(s), students understand that cultural perspectives play a significant role in the design of a culture's products. Students demonstrate their understanding of the perspectives by creating an ad suitable for the target culture.

Students first work in small groups to examine a series of American print and video advertisements and to identify some of the symbols that are used to sell products in the United States (patriotic images, "Wild West" themes, "guy" scenes, etc.). As groups share their findings, listing the most common favorable images used in the American advertisements, they learn relevant target language vocabulary to discuss the perspectives implicit in the choice of images ("rugged" is cool, "natural" is important, etc.). The process is then repeated, this time using a series of target culture print and video advertisements. When consensus is reached on images important in those ads, learners hypothesize about cultural perspectives implicit in the choice of images. For example, if students notice that many French ads contain historical references, they might infer that history plays an important role in the French psyche.

Finally, to demonstrate their understanding of the cultural perspectives inferred, learners choose an American product that is sold in the target culture (such as Coca-Cola or Nike) and develop a list of categories of images that should figure importantly in a target culture advertisement for that product. Each group then chooses a category and a product, finds or creates a picture appropriate for use in advertising the product, and develops a print advertisement in the target language. Using the French example mentioned above, students might draw a picture of Louis XIV, regally attired and wearing a pair of Nikes to which they would add a line or two of advertising copy.

- *Adaptation for novice-level students:* Students learn key vocabulary but use mostly English for the discussion; they examine only print advertisements; they find two or three pictures for each category which would be appropriate to use in the advertisement and explain their choices.
- *Adaptation for advanced-level students:* Discussion is conducted completely in French; learners examine print, video, and audio advertisements; they interview native speakers, when possible, or use the Internet to confirm hypotheses; and they develop an ad campaign proposal to send to a target culture company suggesting how they might market their product in the United States. □

Post to Post: The Biggest Cultural Exchange

I am a newcomer to Texas and I want to start by saying that I have experienced and I am still experiencing the hospitality of the people from this wonderful land. I am living in a remarkable, open-minded town where there are lots of things going on and it is difficult to get bored. I am enjoying a weather that is similar to the weather in the part of Spain that I come from. I have made many friends who try to make me feel at home. But home is thousands of miles away, and I have to admit there are days when I cannot help wondering whether I really made the right decision when I packed up my suitcases to come here. "Of course you did; look at the bright side of life."

I am taking part in one of the programs that the Texas Education Agency is carrying out in order to promote the cultural exchange between Spain and Texas, what is better known as the Texas-Spain Initiative. More concretely, I am one of the lucky persons selected to be an exchange teacher. That means that I came to teach Spanish here in the United States, whereas someone else went to Spain and took my place over there. If I had to use language classroom jargon, I would say we have "reversed roles," since I teach English in Spain and she used to teach Spanish here. We do not exchange wages, but we exchange everything else as far as the work position is concerned: school, students, colleagues, classroom, duties, schedule...

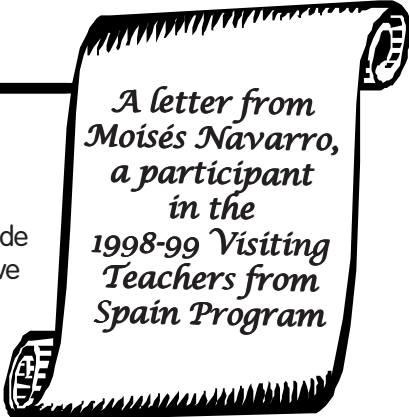
I have always been hungry for knowledge. I consider my duty to get to learn as much as possible about the countries where the English language is spoken. It is true that I can read books, and that I could get by very well at school just by using the information that appears in textbooks as well as all the feedback that we receive through different channels: films, songs, videoclips, advertisements, magazines or newspapers. But I want more. Much more. When I talk to my Spanish students, I want to be proficient with the language and about the culture, and I would like to be able to motivate them through the real experience. Because of this real experience, I will be telling real stories containing first-hand information, and that is one of the best ways to engage students; it helps them realize that what they see through TV does actually exist on the other side of whatever the frontiers may be. And the same thing can be said about my presence here; my American students have a source of immediate information about the language and the culture behind the Spanish that is spoken in Europe.

So by coming here, I will be able (I hope) to put my English in good shape, spend a long time in the country, know details about the society and educational system, and even get paid for that. Mmmmmm... It sounds like a great chance not to be wasted, doesn't it? Besides, I am teaching the language of my country, which makes me somehow feel proud about it. I am also learning about the Spanish influence on this area and about how Spanish is spoken by the native people from Texas, where it is still a very widespread language. I just hope it keeps as relevant and necessary as it is today and the people who speak it do not neglect it. Two languages – two different ways of looking at and understanding reality.

One of the good things about being in this exchange program is that you can obtain highly valuable information and a great deal of help from the person that you are doing the exchange with. As soon as you get into the new country, there are people who know about your arrival and are ready to give you a warm welcome and help you settle down, as well as making things easy for you (finding a house, a car, getting a social security number, etc.) There is even the possibility of exchanging the house and the car, which could make it even easier for everyone and is probably more profitable if the terms are carefully stated from the very beginning.

Not everything is a bed of roses, of course. No matter how ready you are for this new experience, the teaching part may be a bit frustrating at first. The coming teacher must be open to change, whatever it takes to reach his/her new students, and besides, he needs to cope with plenty of small details that might become a huge challenge when you have to deal with all of them at the same time. Work hours are long and demanding and one might drown in paper, but everybody needs some time to adapt. Then you learn to make it easy on yourself and do the most with your time, and that is when the best part of the experience starts. (Please note that in order to manage these things, the help of the languages department is always going to be highly appreciated; I am lucky to work with extremely understanding and helpful colleagues.) That is when you begin to feel that you have the class in your hands, that students are learning, the job is not so hard anymore, and you can enjoy the lively scene and scenery which the town and its surroundings have to offer.

No doubt the beginning is tough, but there is a first time for everything in this life and they say habit is second nature. Once you have taken up the habits of the people you are living with, you are also ready to leave a piece of your heart in that place. And there is another saying that goes "Home is where the heart is." I already bought a bumper sticker for my car in Spain. It has the Texas flag and it reads: "Home." □



*A letter from
Moisés Navarro,
a participant
in the
1998-99 Visiting
Teachers from
Spain Program*

Texas/Spain Initiative Update

The Texas/Spain Initiative Programs have gotten off to a busy start in 1999. Several programs are currently being implemented, including the Visiting Teachers Program and the Summer Institutes.

Visiting Teachers

In the beginning months of 1999, the Texas Education Agency considered applications from numerous school districts state-wide to decide which ones would participate in this year's Visiting Teachers Program. Participating school districts were recently determined and teacher recruiters from those districts will travel to Spain in April to interview prospective Spanish teachers for the coming year. Those teachers who are selected through the interview process will come to Texas and fill teaching positions in Spanish as a second language and bilingual classrooms for the 1999-2000 school year.

The new Visiting Teachers will arrive in July of 1999. They will participate in an orientation program in Austin before beginning their work in various school districts when the school year begins.

Teachers from Spain who participate in the Visiting Teachers Program may stay and work in Texas for a period of up to two years. We are happy to report that many among the "first crop" of Visiting Teachers who arrived in Texas last summer will be extending their stay and professional experience in Texas for another year.

1999 Summer Institutes in Spain

Once again, Spain's Ministry of Education and Culture has issued scholarships for Texas LOTE teachers (both bilingual and Spanish as a second language teachers) to attend Summer Institutes at various Spanish universities. These programs are designed to promote educational and cultural awareness between both nations.

The Twelfth Summer Institute on Children's Literature will be held from July 5 through July 23, 1999, at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid, Spain. This institute will host 33 participants from Texas this summer.

The Tenth Summer Institute on Spanish Language and Culture will be held this July at various universities throughout Spain. Texas teachers of Spanish as a second language have been selected to attend the Universidad de Salamanca (15), Universidad de La Coruña (4), and Universidad de La Laguna & Universidad de Las Palmas in the Canary Islands (1).

We invite you to browse through detailed descriptions of the various programs on our web site at:

www.sedl.org/loteced/texspain.html

For more information regarding any of the Texas/Spain Initiative Programs, please contact Sylvia Juárez-Harms at (800) 476-6861, ext. 289 or by e-mail at sjuarez@sedl.org. □

Testing in an Age of Assessment: Some Theoretical and Practical Considerations

The following excerpt was edited from a paper presented by Dr. Judith Liskin-Gasparro at the *Symposium on Spanish Second Language Acquisition* held at the University of Texas at Austin in October, 1997. It presents a clear description of performance-based assessment and contrasts it with traditional language testing.

The language teaching profession in the United States is now having a love affair with a new kind of assessment, one that is variously called "authentic assessment," "alternative assessment," or "performance assessment." These are being hailed as the true path to educational reform. With assessment that is performance-oriented, the thinking goes, with assessment that aims to measure not only the correctness of a response, but also the thought processes involved in arriving at the response, and that encourages students to reflect on their own learning in both depth and breadth, the belief is that instruction will be pushed into a more thoughtful, more reflexive, richer mode as well. Teachers who teach to these kinds of alternative assessments will naturally

(Liskin-Gasparro continued on page 8)

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Region XX

(210) 370-5200

Call your TEKS liaison to request TEKS for LOTE training!
See cover page and page 11 for more information.

(Liskin-Gasparro continued from page 7)

teach in ways that emphasize reflection, critical thinking, and personal investment in one's own learning. Surely this is a good thing.

Grant Wiggins (1989a, 1989b, 1990, 1994) has written extensively on authentic assessment and on the differences between traditional tests and the new assessment models. His discussion (Wiggins, 1994) on the etymologies of the words "test" and "assessment" provides some interesting insights. The original *testum* was an earthenware pot that was used as a colander, to separate gold from the surrounding ore. The term was later extended to the notion of determining the worth of a product or of a person's effort. The key notion here is that a test measures knowledge or ability *after* the fact, with the assumption that the product of learning will contain in itself all of the information that the evaluator needs to know about the learners and the quality of their thinking processes.

The root of the term "assessment" is *assidere*, which is also the root of the French *asseoir*, to seat or set. It was first used in the sense of setting the value of property to apportion a tax. Assessors traditionally make a site visit -- they inspect the property or the situation and its documents, they categorize its functions, they hear from the owner of the property, they evaluate it by setting it against already-existing standards, and so forth. The assessment requires time, as well as interaction between the assessor and the person or property being assessed, so that the

The idea here is that the product is not sufficient evidence of the quality of the thinking processes that produced it.

congruence of perception with reality or, in our case, the congruence between underlying mental processes and surface observation, can be verified. The idea here is that the product is *not* sufficient evidence of the quality of the thinking processes that produced it.

The discussions of the new assessment models in much of the education reform literature are admittedly quite polemic, with authentic assessment cast as the hero and standardized, paper-and-pencil tests as the villain. However, some of the more salient distinctions drawn are the following. (Haney and Madaus, 1989; Wiggins, 1990)

- First, authentic assessments are viewed as "direct" measures of student performance, since tasks are designed to incorporate the contexts, problems, and solution strategies that students would use in real life. Traditional standardized tests, in contrast, are seen as "indirect" measures, since test items

are designed to "represent competence" by extracting knowledge and skills from their real-life contexts.

- Second, items on standardized instruments tend to test only one domain of knowledge or skill so as to avoid ambiguity for the test taker. Authentic assessment tasks are by design "ill-structured challenges" (Frederiksen, 1984), since their goal is to help students prepare for the complex ambiguities of the "real" world.
- Third, authentic assessments focus on processes and rationales. There is no single correct answer; instead, students are led to craft polished, thorough, and justifiable responses, performances, and products. Traditional tests, on the other hand, are one-time measures that rely on a single correct response to each item; they offer no opportunity for demonstration of thought processes, revision, or interaction with the teacher. Because they usually

There is no single correct answer; instead, students are led to craft polished, thorough, and justifiable responses, performances, and products.

require brief responses, which are often machine-scored, students construct their responses in only the most minimal way and often by only plugging in a piece of knowledge. There is limited potential for traditional tests to measure higher-order thinking skills since, by definition, those skills involve analysis, interpretation, and multiple perspectives.

- Fourth, the new assessment models involve long-range projects, exhibits, and performances that are linked to the curriculum. Students are aware of how and on what knowledge and skills they are to be assessed. Assessment is conceived of as both an evaluative device and a learning activity. Traditional tests, in contrast, must be kept under lock and key so students do not have knowledge about or access to them ahead of time. Thus, traditional tests may seek to improve student performance in a general way via the washback effect -- they will study in a particular way in the hope that this will improve their test performance -- but there is virtually no way that students can "learn by doing" while taking a traditional test in the way that they learn while engaging in a performance-based assessment.
- Fifth, in the new assessment models, the teacher is an important collaborator in the creating of tasks as well as in developing guidelines for scoring and interpretation. Teachers may write traditional tests for their own students and then be responsible for fitting the content and format of the test to the curriculum, but many large-scale tests are developed externally and do not involve at all the teachers whose students are being evaluated. In addition, little or no teacher judgment is required to decide whether a response on a traditional test is correct or incorrect. All of this promotes greater distance between teachers and traditional assessment activities in general and has historically made the study of assessment a pretty dry and unappealing topic in teacher education programs.

(Liskin-Gasparro continued on page 9)

- Finally, there is the sticky area of **validity** and **reliability**, both of which are essential features of good assessment instruments. **Validity** has to do with the faithfulness of a test to its purpose; in other words, how well it measures what it actually purports to measure. **Reliability** refers to the consistency and precision of test scores; in other words, how closely the score an individual gets on a particular assessment measure reflects what could be considered his or her “true score.” Traditional tests can’t be beaten when it comes to reliability, not to mention efficiency. When responses are obviously right or wrong, there is little chance that the scores on a test will vary between one rater and another or if the student takes two parallel versions of the same test. This means that traditional tests lend themselves to a wide range of statistical analyses and comparisons because we can be fairly confident that the true score on a test is very close to the reported score.

The new assessments, on the other hand, are by design ill-structured, messy, open-ended, and complex. And the designers of authentic assessments *like* that this is the case. Because authentic assessments involve students constructing complex,

To use an analogy, an authentic assessment is like a videotape of student learning, while a traditional test is more like a single snapshot

open-ended responses, those who use them will have to struggle with issues of reliability. Where authentic, performance-based assessments shine is when it comes to validity. They reflect real-life tasks, as well as the multi-faceted character of curriculum and pedagogy in ways that a one-shot evaluation cannot. To use an analogy, an authentic assessment is like a videotape of student learning, while a traditional test is more like a single snapshot.

Authentic assessments have been criticized for their subjectivity (largely the reliability issue), and it is certainly true that it is far more difficult to develop standards for evaluation and to apply them consistently across a group of portfolios or oral

performances or research projects than it is to do the same for an objective paper-and-pencil test. But the apparent objectivity of traditional tests hides a host of unanswered -- and often unasked -- questions: Who selected the domains of knowledge to be tested? On what basis? Why were the omitted domains left out? The biases that underlie the development and evaluation of alternative assessments are right there on the surface to be seen, critiqued and, we hope, addressed and corrected, whereas the biases built into traditional tests usually go undetected because they are hidden beneath the surface-level meanings of the test items which in isolation might seem just fine.

If we think about the kinds of foreign language assessments that could be classified as “authentic” or “performance-based” assessments, what would they be? If in the courses you teach or have taken, students have worked on a research project that had stages where they turned in drafts and had conferences with you and where the learning over time was documented as part of the project in addition to the final product, then that was an example of an authentic assessment. If a group of students wrote a skit, got feedback on drafts of the script, staged it and performed it, that would be an authentic assessment. What I am talking about is a multi-staged project that involves reiterative rounds of planning, researching, and producing language and culminating in a product or a performance.

While there are various definitions of authentic assessment, all involve tasks that focus on the communicative, real-world purposes of language rather than on the separate skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing. They also “involve the learner’s ability to solve problems or perform meaningful tasks using a variety of techniques that are age-appropriate, meet curricular goals” and provide an opportunity for students to actively demonstrate what they can do” (The College Board, 1996, p. 30). □

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Resources!

Below are titles, descriptions, URLs, & sponsoring agencies of foreign language resources recently added to the Federal FREE (Federal Resources for Educational Excellence) database. The FREE database was developed by more than 40 federal agencies to make hundreds of teaching & learning resources from across the federal government available and searchable in one place -- the website address for the database is: <http://www.ed.gov/free/>.

- "Integration of WWW Resources in French Language & Instruction, Portland State University" is a set of educational worksheets (in PDF) for working with web sites in French, German, & Spanish. Sample exercises include a visit to a web site in France that lists vacant apartments and an opportunity to shop in an on-line store in Germany.
<http://port-lingua.pdx.edu/>
- "Post Wall Germany: Integrating Post-Unification German Culture into the High School Classroom (in German), University of Massachusetts, Amherst" is a German language gateway to both German- & English-language sites that pertain to German studies. It is one of several projects of the Department of German Studies at Mount Holyoke College.
<http://www.umass.edu/neh/>
- "Senegal in the Classroom, Old Dominion University" provides lesson plans in both French & English, written by the French teachers who participated in a 1997 joint conferences between Old Dominion University & the Universite Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar.
<http://www.teleport.com/~hopperg/senegal/> □

SAVE THE RAINFOREST, INC. is offering full fellowships for two-week tropical rain forest ecology courses in Honduras, Panama and Ecuador in the summer of 2000 for secondary geography, science, and Spanish teachers. The fellowship includes airfare from teacher's point of departure. The application deadline is December 31, 1999.

Contact Bruce Calhoun at:
SAVE THE RAINFOREST, P.O. Box 16271,
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88004,
Phone: (888) 608 9435
E-mail: saverfn@roadrunner.com □

TFLA Spring Conference in Galveston

LOTE CED staff participated in TFLA's spring conference in March, disseminating information on the Center and its activities. **Sylvia Juarez-Harms**, the Texas/Spain Initiative coordinator, sponsored a session in which participants from last year's Ninth Summer Institute on Spanish Language and Culture in Salamanca and two Spanish visiting teachers from Fort Bend shared their experiences from the past summer and school year. **Lillian King** and **Elaine Phillips** discussed the LOTE CED's latest products and initiatives at a session sponsored by the Texas Education Agency. In addition, the LOTE CED's newest training module had its premier, as **Nathan Bond** (Austin) and **Phyllis Thompson** (Houston) led a workshop using Module III-A: Addressing Assessment/Developing Curriculum, which focuses on developing performance-based assessment tasks and rubrics to evaluate student performance. □

ACTFL ANNUAL MEETINGS

Chicago 1998

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) held its 32nd annual convention in Chicago this past November. The annual meeting, workshops, and exhibits took place over four days and included speeches from ACTFL president Elizabeth Hoffman, Robert Wehling, and keynote speaker American astronaut Jerry Linenger. The convention featured over 300 exhibits and 23 workshops and drew a crowd of almost 5,200 participants. Seven LOTE educators were selected for excellence in their field and were honored at the meeting.

Dallas 1999

The convention theme for ACTFL 1999 is "Reflecting on the Past to Shape the Future." **It will be held in conjunction with the fall Texas Foreign Language Association conference at the Wyndham Anatole in Dallas, November 19-21, 1999.** The LOTE CED is sponsoring several sessions and workshops including: *Assessing the Standards: Testing What and How You Teach*; *Creating Student-Centered Activities for Implementing the Standards*; and *Colleagues Helping Colleagues: What Exactly Is Peer Coaching Anyway?* Plan now to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to attend a national foreign language conference in your own backyard! □

LOTE CED Training Modules

In order for teachers to implement the TEKS for LOTE in the classroom, the LOTE CED has developed training modules for language teachers, coordinators, and administrators. The latest module, Module III-A: Addressing Assessment, is described on page one of this newsletter; Modules I and II are described below.

- **Module I**

- **TEKS for LOTE: Overview**

- Provides an overview of the purpose, development, and structure of the TEKS for LOTE.

- **Module II**

- **TEKS for LOTE: Classroom Implementation**

- Reviews the TEKS for LOTE briefly, then provides hands-on practice in developing activities to implement them in the LOTE classroom.

Workshops on the TEKS for LOTE are being facilitated by a group of highly qualified and experienced language educators, many of whom were involved in the development of the TEKS for LOTE. Arrangements for the workshops are being made by the Education Service Centers (ESCs) and some Independent School Districts (ISDs). Contact the TEKS liaison at your ESC or the language coordinator at your ISD to find out about workshops in your area. (For ESC phone numbers, see page 7.)



LOTE Publications - Ordering Information

Project ExCELL Publications

We often receive requests for the publications produced by Project ExCELL (Excellence and Challenge: Expectations for Language Learners). The publications include:

- ***A Texas Framework for Languages Other Than English***

- This curriculum framework serves as an intermediate step between the *Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Languages Other Than English (TEKS for LOTE)* and local curriculum development efforts. The framework facilitates the task of developing curricular materials that are based on the *TEKS for LOTE* that also fit the needs and characteristics of local school districts and campuses.

- ***Professional Development for Language Teachers: Implementing the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Languages Other Than English***

- This document serves as an intermediate step between the *TEKS for LOTE* and in-service language teacher professional development efforts. It provides an issues paper, teacher competencies for use in self-diagnosing areas for improvement, and three models for professional development.

- ***Preparing Language Teachers to Implement the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Languages Other Than English***

- This publication serves as an intermediate step between the *TEKS for LOTE* and pre-service language teacher preparation efforts. It presents pre-service teacher standards and program standards for institutions that prepare prospective language teachers.

All three Project ExCELL documents include a copy of the *Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Languages Other Than English*. Photocopied versions are available from the Texas Foreign Language Association (TFLA) for the cost of duplicating and mailing. The cost to TFLA members is \$2.50/each or \$6.00 for all three; the cost to non-members is \$3.50/each or \$9.00 for all three.

Send checks payable to TFLA to: Phyllis B. Thompson
Houston Baptist University
7502 Fondren
Houston, TX 77074

An original version of *A Texas Framework for Languages Other Than English* can be obtained from TEA. The cost to schools is \$8.00/each; the cost for non-profit organizations is \$10.00/each.

To order, contact: Publications Distribution and Sales
Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701
(512) 463-9744

Prepaid orders: Skip Baylor
P. O. Box 13817
Austin, TX 78711-3817

Did You Know?

The following trends were noted in a comparison of two surveys on foreign language instruction in grades K-12 in the United States conducted by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL). The first survey was conducted in 1987, the second in 1997; you can view the results of the 1997 survey in detail on CAL's web site at www.cal.org.

The good news – foreign language instruction is on the rise...

- In the past decade, foreign language instruction in elementary schools across the country has increased by nearly 10 percent, from 22 percent to 31 percent of all elementary schools.
- The number of schools offering Spanish has increased significantly at both elementary and secondary levels.
- Heritage language classes for native speakers have increased significantly at both elementary and secondary levels (especially for Spanish speakers).
- The teaching of less commonly taught languages has increased at the elementary level for Japanese and at the secondary level for Japanese and Russian.

The not-so-good news – we could be doing better...

- The amount of time secondary teachers report using the foreign language in the classroom has increased only slightly.
- Well-articulated K-12 language programs aimed at high proficiency are still quite uncommon.

Also interesting to note...

- About half of the schools teaching foreign languages said that their teachers were aware of national and/or state standards. Over half of these schools noted that their school's foreign language curricula had changed due to this awareness.

The above was excerpted from an article in the CAL Reporter (No.11, October 1998), a publication of the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington D.C. □