Developing Speaking and Writing Tasks for Second Language Assessment

A Miniguide for Assessment Development

Assessment Team at the University of Minnesota's Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) and the Minnesota Articulation Project

CARLA | Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

DEVELOPING SPEAKING AND WRITING TASKS FOR SECOND LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

THE MINNESOTA LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENTS (MLPA)

A MLPA MINIGUIDE FOR ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT

Background: The Minnesota Language Proficiency Assessments (MLPA)

The University of Minnesota has long been committed to assuring that its students acquire measurable second language proficiency during the course of their studies. In order to graduate, students in the College of Liberal Arts must demonstrate proficiency in a second language through assessments based upon the proficiency guidelines of the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Through its language policies and requirements, the University of Minnesota has also sought to have an impact on language instruction in secondary institutions all across the state.

The Minnesota Language Proficiency Assessments are a battery of instruments developed collaboratively by the Assessment Team at the University of Minnesota's Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) and the Minnesota Articulation Project (MNAP). MNAP brought together language test developers from CARLA and 50 language teaching professionals at the secondary and post-secondary levels from across the state to set standards, develop curriculum, and create assessments for the purpose of articulating second language education programs across and within systems.

The assessments were modeled on instruments and procedures used at the University of Minnesota, where all incoming students who have studied at least three years of French, German, or Spanish at the secondary level and who wish to continue their post-secondary language study in second-year courses must take a battery of language proficiency tests.

Funding and support for development of the MLPA were provided by:

◆ U.S. Department of Education National Language Resource Center program

◆ Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning

◆ National Endowment for the Humanities

◆ Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education

Performance-Based Assessment: The Basics

One of the challenges facing second language teachers is how to provide students with opportunities to show what they can do with the target language (the second language studied; also referred to in this booklet as L2). Assessments must be created that tie into the curriculum and to classroom practice. Assessment tasks must generate language samples with enough depth and breadth so that teachers can make judgements as to how students are doing and provide them with meaningful feedback on their

performance. Students tend to perform best when they are motivated by real reasons to use language—reasons that would be plausible in their lives outside of the classroom.

These considerations suggest a need for performance-based assessment. This type of assessment focuses on simulated real-life situations in which learners must have minimal functional competence in using the target language in order for real communication (speaking, listening, writing, and reading) to take place. The approach is student-centered, and hence, the learner's context serves as one of the organizing elements in the development process. Thus, the Minnesota Articulation Project members (see ***Background*** on page 2) defined performance-based assessments as:

▲ **Contextualized**
The language learner is provided with a meaningful context for real language use. Tasks are organized around one theme, which helps to ground the student in the context. The test taker knows what role s/he is to play, and with whom to interact. Each task is designed so that the next task logically follows, allowing students to build on the information they've already given.

▲ **Authentic**
Tasks are designed to present test takers with a real communicative purpose for a real audience.

▲ **Task based**
Test takers must carry out a well-defined task designed to elicit specific use of the target language.

▲ **Learner centered**
Tasks are realistic for students learning the target language, in terms of age, cultural background, level of cognitive and linguistic maturity, etc. Students are expected to make responses based on their actual circumstances, background, and interests.

Performance-based assessment helps students to understand the development of their communicative competence. It is easy for them to see how they progress in their ability to use language effectively. Performance-based assessment has enough flexibility built into it so that one instrument can be truly appropriate for every student in a classroom, by allowing each student to create personal meaning.

This MLPA Miniguide contains a framework that will help you create speaking and writing tasks and tests that are directly linked to what you do in class. You will find tools and worksheets that you can tailor to your own context and your students' needs, using a model based on extensive research and piloting done by the Minnesota Articulation Project members and the Assessment Team at CARLA.

The MLPA Model for Performance-Based Assessment

developed by the Assessment Team at CARLA

The Minnesota Language Proficiency Assessments are a battery of instruments developed collaboratively by the Assessment Team at the University of Minnesota's Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) and the Minnesota Articulation Project (MNAP). The battery, which includes instruments to assess listening, reading, writing, and speaking, measures proficiency along a scale derived from the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. For all modalities, tasks are situated within an organizational scenario, which provides test takers with:

◆ a plausible reason and motivation to use the target language in a real-life situation, representing as well as possible the test takers' social context (appropriate for interests, developmental level, age, socioeconomic background, etc.)

◆ a general setting which includes where and when the interaction occurs, and background on the person with whom test takers interact (age. status, occupation, relationship to test taker)

◆ a series of interrelated tasks, contextualized in such a way that test takers can build on information learned in previous tasks as they complete subsequent tasks

◆ a clear description of what test takers must do to complete each task: what topic they are to address and how much language they are expected to produce

In addition, test takers are aware of how they will be rated. The criteria are provided and explained in the test booklet, and a sample of level-appropriate discourse is given. For samples of this type of assessment, please visit our web site at www.carla.umn.edu/assessment/MLPA.

Contextualized Speaking and Writing Assessments

The Contextualized Speaking Assessment (CoSA) is the speaking component of the MLPA battery. It is a tape-mediated instrument that requires students to listen to a master cassette and to record their responses on a second cassette. It takes little time to administer (about 20 minutes). The Intermediate-Low CoSA consists of a warm-up, five scored tasks, and a wind-down. The tasks are organized around a theme. Each task is preceded by a description of the context that relates the task to the overall theme. The contextualized tasks engage the test taker in a logical sequence of events with a limited number of interlocutors.

The Contextualized Writing Assessment (CoWA) is a test of written proficiency at the Intermediate level of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. The CoWA model is an efficient choice in situations where it is necessary to establish that the writer's performance meets a minimal criterion, such as for fulfilling a graduation requirement or as a criterion for placement in post-secondary intermediate-level course

sequences. It is available in computer-administered and pencil-and-paper formats. Like the CoSA, it consists of five thematically related segments and five scored tasks. Each segment also contains a warm-up to help test takers prepare for the task. Warm-ups are not scored. All instructions and descriptions for both the CoSA and the CoWA are written in English. This miniguide will focus on developing performance-based tasks for writing and speaking at the Intermediate level, using the Minnesota Language Proficiency Assessments (MLPA) as a model. These proficiency tests are easily adapted for use in the classroom to evaluate achievement of objectives for chapters or units. Moreover, because the MLPA are not language-dependent, they are as convenient to use in a Japanese classroom as they are in French: only the cultural content for your particular context needs to be adjusted.

The miniguide will walk you step-by-step through the test development process. You will learn how to create tasks and tests that measure your students' performance in speaking and writing in a second language (L2). Some examples of how to evaluate students' performance are provided as well. In addition, the miniguide offers a brief look at revising tasks that don't work as planned, and concludes with recommendations for the actual test piloting process.

An important goal of assessment is to elicit a sample that is both varied and long enough to rate. One way to obtain such samples is by developing tasks that are contextualized, authentic, and learner-centered (see page 3).

◆ To get a full picture of a student's proficiency, present test takers with a series of **interrelated tasks** that elicit production according to topic and function determined relevant by benchmarks or curriculum.

◆ Task parameters need to be set so that students are able to get directly into their roles and to rely on their own experiences to provide information. Tasks should not test specific background or cultural knowledge.

◆ At the same time, tasks should be **open-ended** to maximize test taker opportunity for self-expression.

◆ Tasks should **elicit at least sentence-level discourse,** allowing test takers to go beyond memorized phrases and patterns.

◆ All **instructions and tasks should be provided in English**, since test takers are not being tested on their ability to comprehend oral or written target language for these assessments.

With this MLPA miniguide, it is easy to turn your classroom activities into tasks and tests that motivate your students to show what they can do with language.

Some sample tasks follow.

*In creating performance-based tasks, it is important to clearly define **what** it is you wish to assess, **how** you will assess it, and the **criteria** by which you will evaluate it. It is also important to clearly communicate your **expectations** and evaluative criteria to your students. Based on how your students perform, you may find it is necessary to make revisions to your assessment and/or rating criteria.*

A sample writing task

Theme: Keeping a journal

Your teacher has given you a chance to earn extra credit in your German class by keeping a journal in German. You decide to take advantage of the offer. After looking at the assignment, you decide to start right away.

Write legibly
Write as much as you can
Show what you can do

Segment 1: A great day

Situation: Your teacher tells you to think about what a really great day is like for you, and to write about it in your journal.

Warm-up: Think about your idea of a great day, then take a minute to answer the following questions in German or English.

• What are your surroundings (location, sights, sounds, smells, etc.)?
• What do you do?
• Whom are you with, if anyone?

Task: Describe, in German, your idea of a great day. You might want to include **1)** a description of your surroundings; **2)** what you do; **3)** whom you are with, if anyone; **4)** how you feel.

Describe your great day in seven to ten sentences in German.

A sample speaking task

Test takers first are familiarized with the theme, The New Exchange Student:

It's the first week of school, and when you walk into class, you see the new exchange student sitting by herself. You introduce yourself to Christine, who says that she is from Brussels, and that she has just arrived in the United States. You have been studying French, and you'd like to make her feel welcome.

Segment 1

Christine wonders about you: where you're from, how old you are, what you're studying, and so on. Wait until you hear Christine speak, then **tell her about yourself**.

Thinking time:	**15 seconds**
Speaking time:	**60 seconds**

There is a 15-second pause for student to think about what to say, then student hears (but does not see) a prompt in the target language: "Parle-moi un peu de toi."

Student then has 60 seconds in which to respond.

Developing Tasks that Work

Both the CoWA and the CoSA can be modified for use as end-of-chapter/unit achievement evaluations. When the tasks and rating criteria are pulled from unit objectives, specific vocabulary and grammar that were learned determine the topic and function of the assessment. The unit vocabulary and grammar are reflected in the rating criteria as well.

Students need to be aware in advance of how they will be evaluated. To familiarize students with your expectations, do an in-class practice activity similar to the assessment, then show students how they will be evaluated. Students can work in pairs or groups during practice.

Textbooks generally present a topic linked to a specific grammatical function. For example, a chapter on things students must do to prepare for school or to get ready for a party could be presented with verbs expressing obligation, or by using a future tense. To test **achievement** of proficiency-oriented goals, your end-of-chapter writing assessment could read as follows:

Situation

> You just received an e-mail message from your friend (**name**) in (**country**) and he/she tells about all of the things he/she must do at (**school/home/to get ready for a party**). You answer the e-mail message right away and tell (**name**) what you have to do. Write an e-mail message to (**name**) and tell him/her what you have to do (**to help around the house/for school/in class/to get ready for a party**). You may want to mention when, where, or for whom you do these things, whether you do them with a friend or a family member, and whether or not you like doing these things.

Task

> Be sure to write about the things you have to do using a verb or expression of obligation. Write a short e-mail message (at least 7 sentences) to (**name**) and tell him/her what you have to do this weekend.

Note: Your instructions to the student will be much shorter, since you will fill in one name and one task instead of all of the items listed in parentheses.
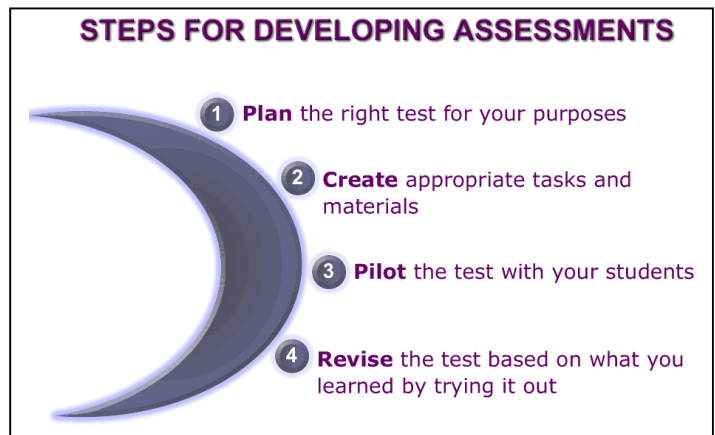
You can construct a CoSA segment in the same manner. In this assessment situation, students have a printed copy of a speaking task or a booklet containing segments that have been developed for your context. They hear a question or statement in L2. After they hear this prompt, students begin to speak into a tape recorder microphone, to a partner, or directly to the instructor.

Informal CoSAs can be done in pairs for practice periodically throughout the term (one partner reads the L2 prompt, the other responds). For informal speaking assessments, students could use a checklist to rate their partner's performance. See page 17 for this and other examples of how to evaluate student performance.

Tools for Task Development

CoSA and CoWA tasks can be created at any level. Examples are provided at the **Intermediate** level, but tasks could easily be constructed at the Novice, Advanced, or Superior levels. Refer to the ACTFL Guidelines for a discussion of performance at those levels (http://www.actfl.org). Another good resource for topic and function at the various levels is *Teaching Language in Context 2nd ed.*, by Alice Omaggio Hadley (1993), Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Since each task is based on specific content and function(s), you need to identify exactly what you wish to assess. To help you get started, this miniguide contains a number of worksheets that you can photocopy and use while creating your own tasks and assessments. See, for example, the planning guides on pages 12-13. Now refer to the worksheets on pages 14-15. Note that the topics/content and functions listed on the grids are also on the development worksheets. Next, look on page 16 to see a sample of how to use the planning guides to fill out your development worksheets.

STEPS FOR DEVELOPING ASSESSMENTS

1. **Plan** the right test for your purposes
2. **Create** appropriate tasks and materials
3. **Pilot** the test with your students
4. **Revise** the test based on what you learned by trying it out

◆ **Function**: the kinds of tasks students can perform using the target language; for example: describing, asking questions, or making suggestions.

◆ **Content**: the topics students can address using the target language

◆ **Situation**: the setting in which the task occurs. This is part of the general theme, if you choose to create a series of interrelated tasks, as in the CoWA or CoSA. You will need to provide information about where the test taker is, what role s/he plays, with whom s/he is interacting, and why s/he needs to use the target language.

◆ **Task**: specific information about what the test taker must do. The task may specify quantity (as in number of sentences for a writing task, or how much time to fill, for a speaking test) and discourse structure (e.g., complete sentences or a verb tense). The task always specifies the topic that the test taker will write or talk about. The task should elicit specific content and functions from the test taker.

A Note on Revision... Revising your CoSA or CoWA may come at any point during the test development process. You may revise tasks several times before you try the test with your students. You may then revise tasks again after you receive feedback from your students about their perceptions of the assessment and how well it worked.

Whenever you revise your tasks, be assured that you will probably revise them several more times before you are satisfied that your assessment really measures what you intend it to measure and that it allows all of your students to show what they can do with the target language. You will find useful focus points to improve your CoSA or CoWA in the margin of this page. Keep in mind that a good assessment instrument will require adjustment for cultural context, student population, and other factors that play a role in the classroom. The next few pages include worksheets for creating proficiency-based tasks for speaking and writing. Pages 10-11 show the elements of a CoWA segment and an actual student response. These MLPA tools will help you to focus on developing contextualized, authentic, and learner-centered tasks.

Using the MLPA Tools

If you are developing an Intermediate level assessment, the specifications guides on pages 12-13 will guide you in choosing from among the linguistic functions your students can perform in the target language. If your assessment is designed to test end-of-unit objectives, you may choose to target one or two functions. If you wish to assess the domain of Intermediate level proficiency, you may include all or most of the functions listed in the specifications in a series of interrelated tasks.

Next, choose a theme, or general setting, in which the language function(s) that you have selected could occur. The worksheets on pages 14-15 provide organizers (column 1) to help you choose a theme. Please note that we've provided a CoWA development worksheet; the CoSA worksheet follows the same format except that, instead of providing a warm-up for each task, the CoSA contains only one warm-up, at the beginning of the assessment. The CoSA also contains a wind-down, intended to make students feel comfortable with what they've accomplished.

Now decide on the specific content, or topic, of each segment. This is where chapter and unit content may serve as a central organizer for your CoSA or CoWA segments.

If you have chosen to construct a full CoSA or CoWA (five segments, warm-ups, and wind-downs), pages 14-16 may be especially helpful. You might like to make a photo-copy to write on, so that you can use these worksheets over and over. These work-sheets provide you with a flowchart of the entire assessment, allowing you to see how each segment is thematically related to the whole. An example of how one segment looks on a completed worksheet is provided on page 16.

If you have time, show your CoWA or CoSA to a colleague for input before you try it out with your students. It is also helpful to do a practice activity with your students in advance to familiarize them with this type of assessment and with what you expect of them. If this activity is new to students, they may lack confidence that they can per-form tasks of this type in the target language. However, they are usually pleasantly surprised when they see how much they can do.

- *How could the task be more clearly defined?*

- *What is the student's reason to use the target language?*

- *Does the situation establish a believable context that involves the speaker?*

- *In what ways is the general setting authentic?*

- *Does the situation invite the writer to show a sufficient range of vocabulary?*

Keeping a journal

Your teacher has given you a chance to earn extra credit in your German class by keeping a journal in German. You decide to take advantage of the offer. After looking at the assignment, you decide to start right away.

**Write legibly
Write as much as you can
Show what you can do**

Segment 1: A great day

Situation: Your teacher tells you to think about what a really great day is like for you, and to write about it in your journal.

Warm-up: Think about your idea of a great day, then take a minute to answer the following questions in German or English.

- What are your surroundings (location, sights, sounds, smells, etc.)?
- What do you do?
- Whom are you with, if anyone:

Task: Describe, in German, your idea of a great day. You might want to include **1)** a description of your surroundings; **2)** what you do; **3)** whom you are with, if anyone; **4)** how you feel.

Describe your great day in seven to ten sentences in German.

Ein guter Tag ist wann ich mit meinem Freund ist. Wir werden in einem Restaurant und ins Kino gehen oder renned in meinem nachbarschaft gehen. Dann wollen wir an eine Stadtbummeln gehen. Es werde sehr warm sein und wir werden viel Spass machen. Wir werden sehr froh sein!

Now have a look at the segment with all of its elements in place…

Theme: Keeping a journal

Your teacher has given you a chance to earn extra credit in your German class by keeping a journal in German. You decide to take advantage of the offer. After looking at the assignment, you decide to start right away.

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Describe your great day in seven to ten sentences in German.

Ein guter Tag ist wann ich mit meinem Freund ist. Wir werden in einem Restaurant und ins Kino gehen oder renned in meinem nachbarschaft gehen. Dann wollen wir an eine Stadtbummeln gehen. Es werde sehr warm sein und wir werden viel Spass machen. Wir werden sehr froh sein!

To create a Contextualized Writing Assessment based on the MLPA model, construct four more segments on the same theme (writing a journal) that target different language functions and topics.

Speaking Assessment Intermediate Level Specifications Planning Guide **Content/Topic**	**Function/Task**	can make up own sentences not limited to memorized material	can participate in short conversations	can ask/answer questions	can get into, through, and out of simple survival situations	can transfer current learned material to new situations/contexts
personal/biographical information						
restaurant/foods						
asking/giving directions						
activities/hobbies						
transportation						
talking on the phone						
lodging/living quarters						
money matters						
health matters						
post office						
numbers 1-1000						
customs						
shopping/making purchases						
greetings/introductions						
making appointments						
making meeting arrangements						
accepting/refusing invitations						
polite, formulaic expressions						

Adapted from: Omaggio, Alice C. (1986). *Teaching Language in Context.* Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Writing Assessment Intermediate Level Specifications Planning Guide **Content/Topic**	**Function/Task**	can create statements/questions on familiar topics	can create statements to meet practical needs	can create statements to meet limited social demands	can write notes/letters	can take simple notes	can write paragraphs	can write short passages	can write short compositions
personal/biographical information									
restaurant/foods									
asking/giving directions									
activities/hobbies									
preferences									
daily routine									
lodging									
health matters									
travel and transportation									
school/work experiences									
everyday events									

Adapted from: Omaggio, Alice C. (1986). *Teaching Language in Context.* **Boston: Heinle & Heinle.**

CoWA Development Worksheet:

I. Theme		II. Topics	III. Situation
Provide students with rich description of the general setting in which they are asked to imagine themselves writing in L2.		Hobbies Personal possessions Leisure time Clothing Celebrations Rooms/housing Family and friends Daily activities Seasons/weather Other areas pertaining to self and immediate	Who is the writer? To whom does s/he write? (age, number, status of audience) What is her/his reason for writing? Other information relevant to the situation.
What is the general setting? What motivates the writer to write in L2?	**Segment 1**		
Is the writer in a plausible situation where s/he can respond with personal experiences?	**Segment 2**		
	Segment 3		
With how many characters does the writer interact? Who are they (age, status, occupation)?	**Segment 4**		
	Segment 5		

Assessment Team, CARLA

Intermediate Level ———————————

IV. Functions	V. Task	VI. Warm-up
Asking questions Making suggestions Describing in areas that pertain to self and immediate environment Narrating based on a sequence of pictures Expressing likes and dislikes	Define in detail what you want the writer to do.	Choose organizers that help the writer to quickly brainstorm ideas before beginning to write. (The warm-up is not graded, and may be written in English or in the target language).

Here's how one segment of your worksheet might look. It is filled out based on the sample writing task provided on page 11.

	I. Theme	II. Topic	III. Situation	IV. Functions	V. Task	VI. Warm-up
	Provide students with rich description of the general setting in which they are asked to imagine themselves writing in L2.	Hobbies Personal possessions Leisure time Clothing Celebrations Rooms/housing Family and friends Daily activities Seasons and weather Other areas pertaining to self and immediate environment	Who is the writer? To whom does s/he write? (age, number, status of audience) What is her/his reason for writing? Other information relevant to the situation	Asking questions Making suggestions Describing in areas that pertain to the self and immediate environment Narrating based on a sequence of pictures Expressing likes and dislikes	Specify the writer's task	Choose organizers that help the writer to quickly brainstorm ideas before beginning to write. (The warm-up is not graded, and may be written in English or written in English or in the target language).
Segment 1	**Keeping a journal for German class. The writer is given a specific assignment.**	**Hobbies Leisure time Family and friends Seasons and weather, etc.**	**The writer is the self, writing for the self (or the teacher). S/he is writing because extra credit has been offered: a plausible situation!**	**Describing in areas that pertain to the self and immediate environment**	**Describe your great day in seven to ten sentences in German.**	**Your surroundings (location, sights, sounds, smells etc.) What you do Whom you are with, if anyone**

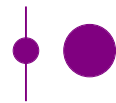What is the general setting? What motivates the writer to write in L2?

Extra Credit!

Is the writer in plausible situation where s/he can respond with personal experiences?

Yes... will be writing about an imagined "great day"

With how many characters does the writer interact? Who are the characters (age, status, occupation)?

Journal/Teacher

Evaluation: Developing and Adapting Criteria

Rating/grading criteria should be clear to both you and the students, and should be quick and efficient to use. A rubric can be used to rate your end-of-unit writing assessment.[1] A sample rubric for a writing assessment follows. The rating criteria demonstrate that the task(s) in this assessment required use of the present tense and vocabulary from the unit.

Name_____			Score: _____/8	
Discourse			**Vocabulary**	
5	Sentence-level discourse. Present tense is used correctly all of the time	3	Wide scope of vocabulary used which goes beyond task requirements.	
4	Sentence level discourse. Present tense is used correctly most of the time.			
3	Sentence-level discourse combined with some lists and/or fragments. The present tense is used correctly some of the time.	2	Vocabulary is varied and adequately fulfills the task requirements.	
2	Mostly lists and fragments. The present tense is used correctly some of the time.	1	Vocabulary is somewhat limited, and task requirements are partially fulfilled.	
1	Only lists and fragments. The present tense is used correctly some of the time.			
0	Only lists and fragments. The present tense is not used correctly.	0	Vocabulary is not adequate to fulfill task requirements.	
	Total Discourse		**Total Vocabulary**	

Here is a checklist that students might use during a practice CoSA in class. Students can prompt and rate each other. It is important to train students to use this kind of a checklist in advance. You might like to model using the checklist, and verify that students understand what is expected of them as "raters."

> Prompt: (In the target language)
> *Tell me, what do you have to do this weekend?*
>
> **My partner's name**_____
>
> **My name** _____
>
> | Score | My partner said… |
> |---|---|
> | **5** | **at least 5 sentences about what s/he has to do this weekend. S/he used a lot of vocabulary from the chapter.** |
> | **4**
3 | **3 or 4 sentences about what s/he has to do this weekend. S/he used some vocabulary from the chapter.** |
> | **2**
1 | **1 or 2 sentences about what s/he has to do this weekend. S/he used little or no vocabulary from the chapter.** |
> | **/5** | **Total** |

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1 An excellent guide to the construction of rubrics can be found in Proficiency-oriented language instruction and assessment: A curriculum handbook for teachers. *D.Tedick, (Ed.), University of Minnesota, Minneapolis: CARLA Working Paper Series. (1997)*

Providing Feedback

Performance-based assessment is designed to get at what students can actually do with the target language. Because it is learner-centered and targets authentic language use, students are motivated to show what they can do based on who they are. The language samples elicited by tasks become a record of their progress.

It is also important that students receive systematic feedback on their performance. Feedback, which may be a single grade, a checklist, or some other kind of progress indicator, tells students whether or not they are meeting objectives set by you, your program, or your administration. The CoSA and CoWA focus on specific criteria (topic and function, for example) rather than being normed on student performance; thus, students do not need to be concerned with how they measure up compared to their peers, but rather with whether or not they have mastered the material.

For both the CoWA and the CoSA, feedback to the student can be provided on the rubric sheet used to rate writing or speaking tasks. A sentence or phrase to summarize the performance provides an overall picture of the student's performance relative to the criteria outlined in the rubric.

As with all rubrics, the criteria must be clearly defined. You will probably want to refine and revise your criteria as you refine your tasks until you come up with something that best meets your needs and those of your colleagues as well. Revision is often easier when done collaboratively. For example, if you plan that several teachers will try out your tasks with their students, you can meet as a group to discuss how well the tasks worked in terms of meeting your goals, and revise tasks and criteria according to the results you get.