



Planning Language Objectives for Integrated Performance Assessments

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The instructor in a course I was taking at the University of Minnesota was talking about the challenge of finding the time to teach all the language that immersion students need to know – the academic language of the content area, procedural language to accomplish cooperative tasks, social language to create friendships and classroom connections, and so on. There isn't enough time in a typical school day, she observed, to cover all that and ensure that students are mastering the content as well. She argued that immersion teachers need to be focused on language that can be recycled and built upon from one lesson to the next, from a social studies unit to a science or math unit, from work students are doing in September to assignments they are completing in April.

The course she was teaching, Language-focused Instructional Practices and Strategies, is one of the required courses for the University of Minnesota's Certificate in Dual Language and Immersion Education.² It was developed to help immersion teachers plan for a stronger, more explicit language focus in their classrooms. For me, the strength of the course lay in the alignment of specific language objectives with assessments that would measure students' progress toward attaining those objectives. Set in the context of an immersion classroom, planning language objectives that could be assessed by a performance task seemed like a powerful, and logical, way to identify language that students would need not only for the immediate lesson but beyond.

Planning Language Objectives

Immersion teachers are now familiar with the concept of content obligatory and content compatible language – terms that were coined by Snow, Met, and Genesee (1989) to describe the language that is necessary for students to comprehend and communicate about a unit or a lesson (content obligatory) and language that is not necessary for comprehension or mastery but flows naturally from the content and gives students a richer language foundation for more advanced study and communication (content compatible). Snow, Met, and Genesee posited that identifying content obligatory and content compatible language would focus instruction in a manner that would improve student language outcomes in content-based second language classrooms, such as immersion.

Identifying content obligatory language and content compatible language does indeed help focus instruction on language, alongside content. However, it is easy to restrict our notion of what language to teach to words – the nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs that students must know

in order to talk or write about the content they are learning. A Scaffold for Writing Language Objectives, developed by Fortune (2002), pushes this notion further. The XYZ formula, as it is called, challenges teachers to cast a wider net. In addition to the vocabulary, what grammatical structures and language functions do students need for comprehensible and accurate output? Here's an example from my unit plan for a third grade social studies unit: Students will use the conditional tense of "to be" and accurate first-person conjugation of verbs (X or language structure) to persuade (Y or language function) classmates that they are the best person to be on a team using nouns, verbs, and adjectives (Z or specific content area words) specific to the fur trade.

Planning Assessment

Shortly after the introduction of content obligatory and content compatible language into the lexicon of second language education, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages received federal funds to develop national standards for foreign language instruction. The result was the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century* (ACTFL, 1996), which identified five learning goals deemed essential for foreign language learning: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. In the words of the Standards' executive summary, "Communication is at the heart of second language study. . . ." The document further identifies three modes of communication that students learning a foreign language should master:

- ♦ **Standard 1.1:** Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions (interpersonal).
- ♦ **Standard 1.2:** Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics (interpretive).
- ♦ **Standard 1.3:** Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics (presentational).

In addition to developing standards for foreign language learning, ACTFL created a model for assessing each of the three communication modes called Integrated Performance Assessments (IPA). Teachers plan instruction based on a theme that cycles through each mode of communication. Each mode is then assessed with a performance task; students receive feedback and move on to the next assessment task for the next mode. The IPA was originally designed for use in foreign language classrooms where the focus is on second language acquisition, not mastery of some other content area. However, in a discussion of the potential use of IPA in content-based classrooms, such as immersion, Tedick and Cammarata (n.d.) suggest that content assessment needs to be considered in addition to language assessment.

Aligning Language Objectives with Performance Assessments

The final assignment in the course I was taking required us to select a thematic unit that had been developed for an immersion classroom, think through the desired student language outcomes (What was the content obligatory and content compatible language necessary for communicating about the unit?), develop a series of performance assessments that would evaluate students' language use within the context of the content area, and create language-rich lessons that would prepare students for the assessments.

I chose a unit that had originally been created by the instructor for a French immersion third grade social studies class on the North American fur trade (<http://z.umn.edu/cobalddfurtrade>). She had identified content and language objectives and created a variety of web-based activities that the students had to work through to achieve content mastery, but her original assessments were largely written to determine content comprehension. Using the subject matter of the fur trade, I created three performance tasks that would also assess students' use of the language needed to discuss the fur trade, formulate opinions, and make judgments. The following unit plan includes an overview of the three tasks with a description of learning activities leading up to each task. One task, for the interpersonal assessment, is spelled out in detail.

Planning Language Objectives for IPAs

Program Model: Early total one-way foreign language immersion

Immersion Language: French

Content Area: Third grade social studies

Big Ideas/Essential Questions/Unit Themes:

Big Idea: Our history is the story of many different peoples and cultures.

Essential Questions: Are some stories more important than others? Do our lives get better when we have contact with other peoples and cultures?

Unit Theme: European demand for furs created the North American fur trade.

Key Content Concepts:

- ♦ Success in the fur trade required the cooperation and assistance of native peoples with European explorers and traders.
- ♦ The fur trade changed the Native American way of life forever.
- ♦ Furs were used as currency.

Performance Assessment Tasks Overview

These three assessments correspond to the three modes of communication identified by the communication standard in ACTFL's *Standards for Foreign Language Teaching*. They do not replace assessment of content comprehension, but can be used to determine student language development within the context of subject matter learning. They are meant to be administered at various points throughout the social studies unit but in the order presented here. Each assessment has corresponding language objectives that have been written using the XYZ formula (Fortune). A sample lesson plan is included for the interpersonal assessment.

Interpretive Task

Learning Activity Leading up to Assessment:

Students work on vocabulary development that is necessary for studying the North American fur trade.

Assessment:

- ♦ Students watch a PowerPoint® presentation created from *La Vie Quotidienne du Voyageur* in *Les Voyageurs Explorent L'Amérique du Nord* (Sotiriadis, 2006) e-book about the daily life of the *voyageurs*.
- ♦ Students answer true/false questions (Figure 1).
- ♦ With a copy of the text, students respond yes/no to two questions and justify their answers: Did the voyageurs like their difficult life? Would you have liked the life of a voyageur?

Interpersonal Task

See accompanying lesson plan

Presentational Task

Learning Activity Leading up to Assessment:

Students will play a game in groups of six where they must pay attention to selected verbs that can cause confusion to immersion students, such as the difference between two verbs that are translated into English as “to know”: *savoir* and *connaître*. They will also need to practice the conditional tense of the first person conjugation of “to be,” as in the phrase, “I would be the best person for the team because...” The content of the game explores further the roles various people played in the North American fur trade and expands on activities, knowledge, and skills already assessed in the interpersonal assessment task.

Assessment:

- ♦ Following the game, students, in groups of three, prepare to present themselves as a team (*mangeur de lard*, *hivernant*, *Amérindienne*) before the rest of the class who are acting as *bourgeois* or *partenaires* in the *Compagnie du Nord-Ouest*. Team members will choose two things to say about their qualifications for the team and practice with the team.
- ♦ After the teams present their qualifications for the job, the class will discuss the merits of each team and which ones they would want to hire for work with the *Compagnie du Nord-Ouest*.

Sample Plan Leading up to Interpersonal Assessment

Lesson Topic:

Commercial activity, like the North American fur trade, requires the talents and skills of a variety of people.

Learning Objectives:

- ♦ **Content:** Students will know what skills and knowledge different players, the *mangeur de lard* [inexperienced voyageur], *hivernant* [experienced voyageur], *Amérindien* [Native American], and *bourgeois* [North West Company], all brought to the work of the North American fur trade.

Before watching the PowerPoint® on the *voyageurs*, read the following sentences. Can you find the answers in the presentation? Write true or false next to each sentence.

___ The *voyageurs* eat a breakfast, a lunch, and a dinner.

___ The *voyageurs* are in their canoes all day long.

___ The *voyageurs* can rest a while on a portage.

___ The *voyageurs* know how to have a good time by singing and playing music.

Figure 1 Translation from French of interpretive task

- ♦ **Culture:** Students will understand that the participants in the fur trade lived in different ways depending on their country of origin (North America, France, Great Britain) and learned from one another in order to carry out commercial activity.
- ♦ **Language:** Students will be able to do the following...

<i>Language Function “X”</i>	<i>Language Structure “Y”</i>	<i>Words/Word Groups/Chunks “Z”</i>
[Content-obligatory] Students will seek information about the skills, knowledge and characteristics of fur trade participants	[Content-obligatory] Using question formats with est-ce que and/or subject-verb inversion; first-person singular (<i>je</i>) and second person formal (<i>vous</i>) conjugation of verbs	[Content-obligatory] With nouns, verbs, and adjectives specific to the fur trade, e.g. <i>le porc salé</i> (salt pork), <i>ramer</i> (to row), <i>robuste</i> (sturdy)
[Content-compatible] Students will negotiate turn taking during the game Infer the identify of a character and give specific reasons for the inference	[Content-compatible] Using turn taking phrases Using a complex sentence with the connector “ <i>parce que</i> ” [because], e.g., <i>Je pense que Personnage A est... parce que...</i>	[Content compatible] As is... penser/deviner + que parce que... savoir + object phrase, pouvoir + infinitive

Learning Experiences/Instruction:

Materials Needed: Interpersonal assessment for expansion phase

Time Frame: 45 - 60 minutes over 2 days

Learning Activities/Tasks: focus-on-form (communicative practice), procedural scaffolding (teacher/student co-creation of text)

Preview Phase – “Into” Activities

- ♦ Review the four principal roles in the fur trade (*mangeur de lard*, *voyageur*, *Amérindien*, and *bourgeois*). This activity will take place after students have had a chance to do some reading, browse the Voyageur website, and complete some assignments on the website.
- ♦ Review first person singular (*je*) and second person formal (*vous*) verb conjugations with –er verbs and common irregular verbs, such as, *avoir*, *être*, *savoir*, *connaître*, *pouvoir*
- ♦ Review question formation using *vous*; e.g. *Qu’est-ce que vous portez? Est-ce que vous avez un fusil? Où est-ce que vous habitez?* [What are you wearing? Do you have a gun? Where do you live?]

Focused Learning Phase – “Through” Activities

(communicative practice of question asking and answering):

Students will play an interpersonal barrier game (information gap activity) which requires them to use question forms to elicit information about the people involved in the fur trade. This game can be played with two people where half the game board needs to be filled out or with four people where each student has only the answers in one column. The answers they receive will allow them to complete the table with the missing information.

	Personnage A	Personnage B	Personnage C	Personnage D
1) Les vêtements Clothing	<i>Une chemise, un pantalon en coton</i> Shirt, cotton trousers	<i>Les habits en peau d'animaux (daim/cerf)</i> Animal (deer) skin clothing	<i>Une tuque rouge à la plume, une ceinture fléchée</i> Red feathered cap, arrowed sash	<i>Un chapeau en peau de castor et les beaux habits</i> Beaver skin hat, nice clothes
2) La nourriture Food	<i>Le porc salé</i> Salt pork	<i>Le maïs, le riz sauvage, le sirop d'érable</i> Corn, wild rice, maple syrup	<i>Le poisson, le pemmican</i> Fish, pemmican	<i>Les repas dans un «Great Hall»</i> Meals in the Great Hall
3) L'habitation Home	<i>Montréal</i> Montreal	<i>Les wigwams</i> Wigwams	<i>En plein air sous un canot</i> In the open air under a canoe	<i>Un appartement dans un fort</i> An apartment in a fort
4) Le travail Work	<i>Ramer</i> Rowing	<i>Préparer les peaux pour le troc</i> Preparing skins for trade	<i>Ramer, porter des canots et des marchandises au dos durant le portage</i> Rowing, carrying canoes and goods on the back during a portage	<i>Évaluer les peaux, échanger les marchandises contre les peaux</i> Evaluating skins, trading goods for skins
5) Le troc Trading	<i>La marchandise de Montréal</i> Goods from Montreal	<i>Les peaux, les fourrures</i> Skins and furs	<i>Les peaux, les fourrures</i> Skins and furs	<i>Les outils, du tissu, du tabac</i> Tools, fabric, tobacco
6) Les loisirs Leisure	<i>La musique, les contes</i> Music, storytelling	<i>Les jeux</i> Games	<i>La musique, les contes</i> Music, storytelling	<i>La musique et la danse</i> Music, dance
7) Les armes Weapons	<i>Les fusils</i> Guns	<i>Un arc, les flèches</i> Bow, arrows	<i>Les fusils</i> Guns	<i>Les fusils</i> Guns
8) Le transport Transportation	<i>Un grand canot de maître</i> Big canoe	<i>Un canot, un toboggan, les raquettes</i> Canoe, toboggan, snowshoes	<i>Un petit canot du Nord</i> Small canoe	<i>Un grand canot de maître</i> Big canoe
9) Les langues Languages	<i>Français</i> French	<i>Ojibwe, Français</i> Ojibwe, French	<i>Français, Ojibwe</i> French, Ojibwe	<i>Anglais</i> English
10) Les traits personnels Personal characteristics	<i>Petit, mais fort</i> Small, but strong	<i>Aimable, prêt à aider les voyageurs</i> Friendly, ready to help the voyageurs	<i>Robuste et courageux</i> Sturdy and brave	<i>Travailleur</i> Hard working
Qui suis-je ? Who am I ?	[Un Mangeur de lard]	[Un/e Amérindien/ne]	[Un Hivernant]	[Un Bourgeois]

Table 1 Game board for interpersonal barrier game

Expansion Phase – “Beyond” Activities (day 2)

(procedural scaffolding):

The teacher and students will co-create a want ad (*Petite Annonce*) looking for personnel for a trip to the *Pays d'en Haut* from Montréal. Using the information gathered in the barrier game and drawing on previous knowledge of the players in the fur trade, the class will brainstorm questions to include in a want ad that will give clues to what the bourgeois are looking for. They will need to use the second person formal form to ask different types of questions that align with first person singular sentences they will be using in a later lesson with the presentational assessment (the verbs *aimer, être, avoir, pouvoir, savoir, connaître*).

Example

Cherche personnel pour voyager en provenance de Montréal à une destination du Pays d'en Haut. Avez-vous un fusil? Aimez-vous dormir sous les étoiles? Savez-vous comment faire un bon feu? Êtes-vous fort? Connaissez-vous la route de Montréal à ...? Pouvez-vous parler Ojibwe? Vous serez la meilleure personne pour notre équipe.

[Looking for personnel to travel from Montreal to a destination in the *Pays d'en Haut*. Do you have a gun? Do you like to sleep under the stars? Do you know how to make a roaring fire? Are you strong? Do you know the way from Montreal to ...? Can you speak Ojibwe? You will be the best person for our team.]

Lesson-level Formative Assessment:

Exit card to be given to each student at the end of the lesson:

The following interview for a member of the voyageur team has only the answers. Can you write the missing questions?

M. le Bourgeois: _____
_____?

André: *Oui, monsieur, je peux transporter un canot et deux sacs au dos.* [Yes, sir, I can carry a canoe and two bags on my back.]

M. le Bourgeois: _____
_____?

André: *J'aime les histoires amusantes.* [I like funny stories.]

Endnotes

1. CoBaLTT (Content-Based Language Teaching with Technology) was a 7-year project funded by CARLA and directed by Diane Tedick at the University of Minnesota. It provided professional development for foreign language and immersion teachers and involved the creation of an extensive web resource center, which can be accessed at www.carla.umn.edu/CoBaLTT/
2. The Certificate Program in Dual Language and Immersion Education is a 15-credit program providing professional development for immersion educators. Much of the program is offered online. For more information visit <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ci/programs/college/certificates/languageimmersion.html>

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