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August 6, 2018

Assessment Design Project

**Background Information:**

The purpose of this assessment is to determine student ability to read an authentic source of input, determine the main idea, and respond. In particular, students will read an email and give advice to the author based on the conflict found within the text. This construct is relevant in many situations where individuals are asked to give advice to peers based on limited information given. Whether in person or via a technological tool, people seek advice on issues every day; therefore, this task is to enhance student ability to adequately provide feedback to a peer on a particular conflict.

This assessment is aimed for Intermediate Low students as defined by ACTFL in their Intermediate Can-Do Statements which can include high school students in their second year of Spanish studies. The specific Can-Do statement reads, “I can express, ask about, and react with some details to preferences, feelings, or opinions on familiar topics, by creating simple sentences and asking appropriate follow-up questions” (“NCSSFL-ACTFL”, p. 3). These students have basic skills in their ability to express themselves and will use this assessment as an indicator of areas of improvement. The teacher will score the assessment using the a “correct/incorrect” scoring on the short response in the reading portion of the test and the analytical rubric for the writing composition. An analysis of the writing criteria can provide feedback to the teacher and students about areas of strengths and weaknesses. This can then be used to inform teachers about future lessons and course directions in order to assist struggling students and encourage on-level students to continue progressing with their second language acquisition. This assessment is used more for a summative report on students’ ability to analyze text and respond; therefore, the stakeholders in this particular assessment include the students, teacher, parents, and administrative team. Parents and students will see how the student is progressing in the course while administrators can use the assessment as evidence in upcoming teacher observations and evaluations.

**Overall Design:**

This assessment aims to evaluate students in the areas of reading and writing. More specifically, students will need to demonstrate their knowledge and usage of particular vocabulary and grammar structures within the reading and writing tasks. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) state, “The assessment of writing implies by definition the assessment of reading as well” (p. 260) and continue with the notion that “most vocabulary study is carried out through reading” (p. 271). This assessment would be embedded in a unit focused on desires and responsibilities and the necessary lexical and grammatical forms to appropriately satisfy the objectives of using the language in a comprehensive manner. Students will need ample instructional time to demonstrate understanding of communicating a desire in Spanish as this is sometimes a difficult task for Intermediate Low learners. This task may elicit the use of the subjunctive tense: content that is sometimes avoided until more advanced levels of language learning. It is appropriate to discuss this verb tense as typical, day-to-day conversations often include the use of the subjunctive though it is important to note that the use of this tense is not required in order to show understanding of the content.

The proposed assessment has two parts: reading and writing. Within the reading section, Pablo writes to a friend via email to ask for advice on getting a job per his parents mandate or to play soccer for the school’s new team. The email has eleven sentences using language described in Nell’s (2010) recommendation as “not too difficult for them to read but challenging enough to encourage them to work hard in their comprehension” (p. 2). There are four comprehension items that follow the email. The items are short response to allow for the rater to easily see if students were able to identify the main idea(s) of the email, so long as “the required response is really short, unique and can be found in the text” (Hughes, 2003, 79-80). Hughes (2003) notes that finding the main idea of the text is an important characteristic of a “competent reader” and “it’s reasonable to expect candidates to be able to perform” in accordance to these questions (p. 153). The questions are asked in Spanish using simple language to allow students to easily show their understanding of the email. Hughes (2003) states, “the best short answer questions are those with a unique correct response” (p. 144). For this reason, the items were designed to elicit a single correct response. Students will be expected to respond to the questions using the target language in complete sentences per the directions found at the top of the assessment page. Failure to use complete sentences will not hinder the scoring of the assessment though commenting on the lack of complete sentences should be noted as well as the possible reasons for not following the directions. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) support the use of short response questions because students can “construct their own answers” and increase washback by creating “potential follow-up discussion” (p. 247). In order to accommodate for students with learning disabilities, the teacher should modify the reading comprehension assessment according to Wight (2015) by incorporating “modifications and accommodations based on an individual student’s need” such as “extra time, reduced quantity of content, and pre-test preparation” (p. 49). Points will be given for answers that are formatted (i.e. complete sentences) and answer the question correctly to eliminate construct irrelevance. The writing portion of the test will be a student-generated response to Pablo offering their advice in the target language addressing the concerns that Pablo raises in the provided email. The teacher will use the provided rubric to score the writing compositions.

After the teacher scores the assessment, students will receive the feedback in the form of a grade on the reading portion and comments and a rating on the writing portion. Specifically, the reading assessment will yield a score of correct and incorrect, and the writing assessment will elicit comments and ratings using the categories within the rubric. Hughes (2003) states, “there will be many situations in which feedback to the candidates on their performance will be useful” (p. 108). He continues by noting that both writing-specific and non-writing specific categories can be areas of commentary for the rater. The teacher may choose to inform the class as a whole about overall trends which many generate conversation about future classroom happenings and other areas of impact. Additionally, informing other stakeholders such as department chairpersons, administration, and parents about the trends found within the assessment results may allow for well-informed conversations about student progress and the success of the curriculum and teacher instruction.

**Administration:**

The administration of the test should be fairly easy to incorporate into any lesson plan calendar. I would give the reading assessment at the beginning of the class period and the writing assessment upon completion of the reading assessment. I think that this can be done in a 50-minute class period as the length of the reading prompt is short, the items for the comprehension portion are four short response questions, and the writing portion should take about 25 minutes. The proctor of the assessment should be the teacher so that clarification questions can be accurately answered. The assessment should be taken in the classroom as it is a familiar environment for students to “take small steps toward becoming proficient writers” (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 282). The test is a paper and pencil assessment, so preparation of copies and extra pencils is essential to allow for an optimal test-taking environment.

After the students complete the assessment, the teacher should score it as soon as possible to give timely feedback for the students. An answer key is provided for the reading comprehension questions, and an analytic rubric is found at the bottom of the writing assessment answer document. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) encourage teachers to “be as positive as possible” when providing comments to students as to “encourage the writer” in their quest to becoming adequate communicators in the target language (p. 289). Examples of positive feedback include noting correctness in language use, the ability to state an opinion and support the opinion in detail, and overall generated output from the student in the target language. In order to evaluate the results of the test, the teacher can count correct and incorrect items in the reading comprehension assessment. For the writing task, the teacher can count the number of student writing compositions that fall into each category of the rubric. This will show areas of strength and weakness in the students’ writing abilities. Again, collecting this data can increase consequential validity and aide in making appropriate changes for better student success.

**Appendix: Assessment Tools**

**Reading and Writing Assessment**

**READING:**

**Directions** Read the following email correspondence from your E-Pal in Spain. Answer the questions that follow using complete sentences in Spanish.

Maribel,

¿Qué tal? Yo no estoy muy bien. Estoy nervioso porque mis padres me dicen que yo necesito tener un trabajo. No tengo mucho tiempo para tabajar. Además, hay un equipo nuevo de fútbol en mi escuela y quiero jugar. Las prácticas son muy largas y son todos los días después de las clases. Debo respetar a mis padres. Les quiero mucho. Pero, quiero divertirme con amigos. Voy a hacer mi tarea y pensar más. ¿Qué hago?

Pablo

1. ¿Por qué está nervioso Carlos?

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2. ¿Cuándo hay prácticas de fútbol?

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3. ¿Qué quiere hacer Pablo?

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4. ¿Por qué no puede escribir más en el correo electrónico?

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\*KEY\*

1. Porque tiene que conseguir un trabajo

2. todos los días

3. jugar al fútbol

4. tiene que hacer la tarea

**WRITING:**

**Directions** Write a response to Pablo’s email as if you’re Maribel. What should Pablo do? Explain your position with clear examples and details. Use the graphic organizer below to organize your ideas and reference the rubric as needed.

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| What should Pablo do? | Why? |
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| Criteria | 5 points | 3 points | 1 point |
| Vocabulary | Demonstrates appropriate use of vocabulary using strong phrasing and expressions. | Uses limited but emerging vocabulary to express ideas effectively | Uses basic vocabulary or copies terms from prompt |
| Comprehensibility | Text does not require interpretation from reader | Text requires some interpretations from reader | Text is barely comprehensible |
| Language Control | Text demonstrates knowledge of language structures and uses correct spelling and punctuation. | Text demonstrates knowledge of basic language structures with minor spelling and punctuation errors. | Text demonstrates little to no understanding of language structures with several spelling and punctuation errors. |

\*Adapted from Fairfax County Public Schools Foreign Language Program of Studies. ©2003

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