



BY CHERICE MONTGOMERY

The Transformative Power of PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT

What comes to mind when you hear the word *assessment*? For students and teachers alike, the word often evokes feelings of anxiety, stress, and frustration. This may be a result of the things we do with assessment, and of the things assessment does to us. In an *Education Week* article from 1993 entitled “The Invention of Intelligence,” F. Allan Hanson, a professor of anthropology at the University of Kansas, explains:

In a very real sense, tests have invented all of us. They play an important role in determining what opportunities are offered to or withheld from us, they mold the expectations and evaluations that others form of us (and we form of them), and they heavily influence our assessments of our own abilities and worth. Therefore, although testing is usually considered to be a means of appraising qualities that are already present in a person, in actuality the individual in contemporary society is not so much measured by tests as constructed by them.

This statement highlights the fact that assessment is a powerful tool. It can be used to accept or reject, to validate or denigrate, to include or exclude, to build or destroy. In language education, each experience that students have with assessment influences their assumptions about language learning (it is easy/hard, interesting/boring, fun/painful), their beliefs about their language abilities (I am/am not good at learning language), their confidence in their language skills (I can/cannot use my language to accomplish real tasks), their self-perceptions (I am smart/dumb), their willingness to take risks and invest time in language learning (I do/do not want to talk with native speakers), and their expectations for their future success (The target language will/will not become an integral part of my life). Each of these factors has also

been linked to motivation and/or proficiency development. When we thoughtfully plan our assessments so that they strategically affect students’ perspectives on language learning, we can improve their language learning experiences and transform their beliefs about themselves in powerful ways.

These realizations led me to ask myself: *What kind of language learners are my assessments constructing? Who do I want my students to become? How might I use the power of assessment to transform language teaching and learning in meaningful ways?*

While I want my assessments to provide a realistic picture of students’ progress, I also want them to build my students’ confidence in their language skills. Although I would like my students to become accurate target language speakers, I also want them to become strategic target language users who actively draw on their skills to solve real problems and make substantive contributions to society. I do not want my assessments to constantly indicate all that my students do not know and just how far they still have

to go. Instead, I want to use the power of assessment to communicate to students the incalculable value of their language skills, to celebrate their progress, and to facilitate risk-taking. I want my assessments to evaluate language learning even as they facilitate the shaping of meaningful personal and professional identities. Most of all, I want to use the power of assessment not just to calculate grades, but also to enable students to use their language skills to improve themselves, their lives, and the world around them.

The Transformative Potential of Performance-Based Assessments

Creating meaningful assessments does not have to be an overwhelming project. The remainder of this article outlines a simple process for designing performance-based assessments which consists of five steps:

Step 1: Select a Meaningful Topic

The first step in creating a transformative, performance-based assessment is to identify a meaningful topic that naturally motivates

Creating Meaningful Performance-Based Assessments

<i>Steps</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
1. Select a meaningful topic	Motivates students to want to communicate
2. Locate culturally authentic texts	Builds students’ knowledge of the topic so they have something to say about it
3. Develop cognitively challenging interpretive tasks	Involves students in making sense of texts about the topic
4. Design opportunities for students to talk	Invites students to express their opinions about the topic and the texts
5. Support students in sharing their learning with templates, tools, and timely feedback	Supports students in publicly sharing what they have learned about the topic by talking about the text with authentic audiences

students to want to say something about it. In order to accomplish this, ask yourself questions like: *What do my students talk about in the hallways? Which current events seem to capture their attention? What cultural topics intrigue them? Which social problems or community issues seem to concern them?* Students particularly enjoy discussing topics that are directly related to their personal lives, such as childhood memories, dating, education, entertainment, fashion, friendship, or technology. The *Course Themes and Recommended Contexts* from the *AP Curriculum Frameworks* offer a wealth of additional possibilities for topics.

In addition to capitalizing on a real-life reason to communicate that is connected to students' daily lives, effective performance-based assessments also focus on identifying an appropriate setting and audience for that communication. Ask yourself: *In what real-life settings and for what real-life purposes do people naturally discuss the topic I have selected? Which groups of target language speakers could serve as an appropriate audience for such a discussion?* Your answers to these questions will help you to craft a meaningful context for your assessment that will allow you to avoid using decontextualized or contrived prompts. You will then be ready to locate intriguing texts that students can listen to, read, or watch in order to learn more about the topic you have selected.

Step 2: Locate Culturally Authentic Texts

The second step in creating a transformative, performance-based assessment is to select two or three culturally authentic texts that will give students something interesting to say about the topic (see table at right for resources).

Ideally, the texts you choose will represent a variety of different perspectives, genres, and culturally authentic media (e.g., advertisements, children's picture books, comic strips, famous art works, literary texts such as poetry or short stories, newspaper or magazine articles, radio interviews, realia, songs, video clips). Incorporating a diverse array of materials gives students a wider range of ideas to discuss, tends to encourage more critical thinking, and increases the

Locating Culturally Authentic Texts

Searching for culturally authentic materials can be frustrating if you do not know where to look. Here are several strategies and websites that may help.

What are you trying to find?	Strategies
Advertisements	<i>Ads of the World</i> adsoftheworld.com/
Children's books	<i>International Children's Digital Library</i> www.childrenslibrary.org/icdl/SimpleSearchCategory?ilang=English
Comic strips	<i>Lambiek Comiclopedia</i> – Compendium of comics from around the world www.lambiek.net/artists/index.htm <i>Bedetheque</i> – Database of comics in French www.bedetheque.com/ <i>Comics Auf Deutsch</i> – Collection of comics in German webgerman.com/german/comics/
Culturally authentic resources for Spanish teachers	<i>Culture Connection</i> cultureconnection.wikispaces.com/
Images or infographics	Do a Google image search Look for a curated collection such as <i>Infografias en castellano</i> infografiasencastellano.com/ <i>Stock Xchng</i> sxc.hu/
Materials in the target language	Enter search terms in the target language (i.e., <i>tecnología</i>) Narrow search by entering terms in quotation marks (i.e., “technology cartoons” or “technology infographics”) Use a country-specific search engine such as <i>Search Engine Colossus: An International Directory of Search Engines</i> www.searchenginecolossus.com/
Music	<i>Charts All Over the World</i> www.lanet.lv/misc/charts/
Newspapers	<i>Kiosko.net</i> en.kiosko.net/ <i>Newseum</i> www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/ <i>Newspaper Map</i> newspapermap.com/
Pedagogical materials	Most pedagogical materials come in the form of documents, PDFs, or PowerPoints. Try a filetype search (filetype:doc <i>tecnología</i>), (filetype:pdf <i>tecnología</i>), (filetype:ppt <i>tecnología</i>)
Realia	<i>The Realia Project</i> www.realiaproject.org/
Texts	<i>Librivox</i> https://librivox.org/ <i>Project Gutenberg</i> www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page <i>Reading Resources for French Teachers</i> readingresources4frenchteachers.wikispaces.com/Home

likelihood that students will be able to access information from at least one of the texts.

Texts that activate students' prior knowledge, build their understanding of the topic, and help them to explore the topic from different perspectives are especially effective in preparing students to communicate about the topic (technology will serve as the sample topic for the examples that follow):

- You might **activate students' personal experiences** through texts that help them make personal connections to technology, such as cartoons that highlight some of humorous social behaviors that technology helps to perpetuate (like a child sitting in an upstairs bedroom texting a parent in the kitchen to find out if dinner is ready).
- You could **build students' knowledge about the topic** of technology with magazine quizzes about the nature and frequency of teen technology use, carefully selected quotes from a research report on the negative effects of media consumption by young children, or a short newspaper article about how the portability and ubiquity of technology is changing cultural norms.
- You could **expose students to multiple perspectives regarding the topic** through texts such as an infographic that compares technology use in the target culture with that of the United States, a radio interview that discusses the pros and cons of technology use, or a video clip from a popular talk show in which parents and children express their opinions about appropriate technology use.

Each of these different types of texts assists students in developing an expanded understanding of the topic and encourages students to think more critically about it. Culturally authentic texts also play important roles in capturing students' interest and preparing them to use their language for real-world purposes. Most importantly, when students experience success when interpreting a culturally authentic text, they begin to

realize that they can use the target language to do real things in the real world. They begin to perceive themselves as competent students and to believe that they are capable of learning the target language. As their confidence increases, they are willing to take more risks in their language learning. However, these outcomes depend on the extent to which students experience success when working with culturally authentic tasks. Many students worry that culturally authentic texts will be too difficult for them to understand.

Any culturally authentic text can be made accessible for even beginning language learners when teachers thoughtfully develop carefully structured interpretive tasks that involve students in actively exploring it. For instance, instead of editing or simplifying culturally authentic texts, consider using strategies such as repetition, redaction, visualization, and collaboration. Repetition allows students to listen to or view the text repeatedly for different purposes (e.g., watching a video clip initially to identify the genre, then to identify key events, and finally, to determine how the main character feels about the events). Redaction means carefully selecting only brief quotes from the text on which you want students to focus. Visualization involves choosing texts that offer extensive visual support (such as children's picture books, comic strips, infographics, or maps) or having students illustrate important events or processes from the text. Collaboration asks students to work together to complete activities that will help them better understand the meaning of the text (such as sharing information to complete graphic organizers, working together to match pictures with text, or helping one another sequence main events from the text). However, tasks that use repetition, redaction, visualization, or collaboration to support comprehension are not enough. Language learners also need tasks that help them evaluate the content and accuracy of the texts they are reading; challenge them to think critically about what they are listening to, reading, or viewing; and assist them in forming opinions that they can express about the topic.

Step 3: Develop Cognitively Challenging Interpretive Tasks

Designing intellectually interesting interpretive tasks that involve students in actively exploring the texts you have selected is the third step in creating meaningful, performance-based assessments. Tasks that **require students to think critically about the ethical implications of the topic** for society, or engage them in examining the meaning of a text for their personal lives, are especially likely to create shifts in perspective that affect how students view themselves and value the language they are learning. For example, students could survey one another to find out how they are using technology in their daily lives (e.g., *Do you send more than 100 text messages per day?*), and then compare their results with national averages reported in an infographic. They could analyze brochures or commercials for several different brands of a particular product to identify what techniques are used to get people to buy technology items, or could work together in pairs to sort various items of technology that are pictured in advertisements into categories such as "needs" or "wants."

Students could also skim newspaper or magazine articles and copy statements onto index cards that serve as evidence to support their personal position on whether technology has a positive or a negative effect on society. Such statements could be used in conjunction with what students have learned from short video clips as the substance of a debate regarding the value of emerging technologies. These kinds of tasks are especially useful because they allow students with Novice-level proficiency to respond by creating lists that consist of isolated words, while students with Intermediate or Advanced proficiency can answer using sentences or paragraphs. Tasks like these are also intellectually interesting and personally meaningful, so they motivate students to want to communicate about what they are hearing, reading, or viewing.

Step 4: Design Opportunities for Students to Talk

What we assess communicates to our students what we value. Thus, if we hope

to transform our language learners into proficient language speakers, we must orally assess their interpersonal skills. However, many teachers find it easiest to assess presentational communication tasks. They often avoid interpersonal oral assessment because they feel it takes too much class time, they lack access to enough technology for each student, or they feel that their students are incapable of successfully participating in interpersonal activities such as spontaneous conversations and debates. The fourth step in creating a performance-based assessment is inviting students to orally express personal opinions about the texts they have read or viewed. Consequently, the remainder of this section offers several ideas for overcoming the challenges commonly associated with oral assessment.

Oral assessment can be quick and easy to prepare. It does not have to be difficult to design or time-consuming to administer. For example, during the last 5 minutes of class, Skye LeFevre, a middle school Spanish teacher from American Fork, UT, invites several pairs of students to draw a topic from a box, have an impromptu conversation about it in front of the class, and then respond to questions from their peers. In this way, she can continuously assess the interpersonal communication skills of a few of her students each day without taking up a lot of class time. The format she uses increases students' comfort level with spontaneous speaking and allows her to support them in learning the skills they need to actively negotiate meaning.

Another simple technique for helping students to become more comfortable in actively negotiating meaning is to ask them to change topics and partners frequently. For instance, a teacher can arrange students in inside/outside circles, and then display a discussion prompt on a PowerPoint slide. The prompt could be a controversial opinion to defend, an interesting image for discussion, a question that evokes students' personal experiences with a topic, or a quotation that students read and then evaluate. Each time the teacher advances to a new prompt, students change partners. The teacher cir-

culates, providing just-in-time feedback on students' performance.

The teacher is not the only person who can evaluate oral assessments. Peer evaluation is an excellent way to help guide students' attention to the key features in a conversation that they need to practice in order to improve their language performance. One approach is to seat students in groups of eight, with the four students who will be assessed facing one another, and a different "peer evaluator" sitting behind each one. The four students in the center of the group converse about an audio or video clip, while the students seated behind them must use a checklist or rubric to assess the individual performance of the peer they were assigned.

Technology can facilitate the administration of interpersonal oral assessments. For instance, Eric Diaz, a Spanish teacher from Lakeridge Middle School in Orem, UT, checks out small voice recorders to pairs of students on designated testing days. He gives them a few minutes to complete a conversation template that will guide their interpersonal conversation, and then gives them 5 minutes to collaboratively record brief conversations while the rest of the

class is working on another assignment. Later, he listens to the recordings and provides feedback on student performance using the same simple rubric that students used to self-assess their own performance before returning the voice recorders. In schools where sufficient classroom access to technological equipment may be an issue, students might use their own electronic devices (such as cell phones or tablets) to record themselves.

Pedagogical techniques can strengthen students' success with interpersonal activities. One such technique is called Human Graphing. The teacher begins this whole class conversation activity by placing a line made of tape on the floor and posting signs written in the target language on the wall or whiteboard so that they form a continuum: *Die for It [Disagree], Convince Others, Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree, Convince Others, & Die for It [Agree]*. Next, the teacher makes a controversial statement, and students must physically arrange themselves along the continuum based on the degree to which they agree with the statement. The teacher then asks students to discuss their opinions with those standing near them, or calls on individual students to justify their opinion.

Sample Rubric for Expressing and Justifying Opinions

4	3	2	1
Clearly states an opinion, provides multiple reasons to justify the opinion, and defends the opinion with additional explanation when challenged	States an opinion and provides at least one reason to justify the opinion	States an opinion, but only gives a reason if prompted to do so	Expresses agreement or disagreement with someone else's opinion, but cannot state their own
<i>Creo que . . . porque . . . , además . . .</i> OR <i>No creo que . . . porque . . . , no obstante . . .</i>	<i>Creo que . . . porque . . .</i> OR <i>No creo que . . . porque . . .</i>	<i>Creo que . . .</i> OR <i>No creo que . . .</i>	<i>Sí/Estoy de acuerdo.</i> OR <i>No/No estoy de acuerdo./</i> <i>No lo creo.</i>

(Students' responses can be evaluated based on a simple rubric such as the one below.)

Interpersonal tasks like these provide students with structured opportunities to cognitively process both the conceptual ideas and cultural content they encounter in the texts in socially satisfying ways. This processing can help students find joy and satisfaction in their language learning, and prepares them to appropriate the content for their own creative self-expression in presentational tasks.

Presentational tasks can promote creative self-expression. Once students have had the opportunity to explore a topic, consider a variety of perspectives on the topic through culturally authentic texts, and participate in tasks that help them to make sense of the meaning of those texts, they are ready to creatively package and share what they have learned with target language communities. For instance, students exploring the topic of technology might prepare advertisements designed to warn target language speakers of the dangers of excessive technology use, or public service announcements (PSAs) that advocate for the ethical use of emerging technologies in target language cultures. These tasks become especially powerful when the teacher looks for ways to connect them to the Communities Standards. For example, during their units on health and hygiene, Carrie Gold from Provo, UT and Sarah Fox from Lansing, MI each created service learning projects for their classes by partnering with doctors who volunteered their time in medical clinics in Honduras and the Dominican Republic. Using culturally authentic materials collected from these countries by the doctors, the teachers developed learning centers designed to engage students in comparing and contrasting common threats to health in those countries with those most typical of the United States. Students examined photos and analyzed information from various articles to discover how a lack of information regarding issues such as cleaning wounds, avoiding the transmission of HIV, and protecting against malaria-carrying mosquitoes can affect quality of life. Students

then created advertisements, children's stories, pop-up books, PSAs, and puppet shows in Spanish designed to teach children about these issues. Students' products were given to the volunteer medical teams to use with future patients. When students know they will be sharing their work with authentic target language audiences for real purposes, they are motivated to invest more time in developing the content of their message, in accurately choosing the words and sentence structures most appropriate for communicating their message, and in improving the quality and aesthetic appeal of what they produce (see table below).

Step 5: Support Students with Templates, Tools, and Timely Feedback

Templates can support students in preparing quality products. It is not necessary for stu-

dents to possess extensive vocabularies or a strong command of sophisticated structures to complete the kinds of tasks outlined in the previous section. With adequate guidance from the teacher, even Level 1 students can comment on complex topics. Teachers can identify which portions of a task need scaffolding (i.e., extra support) by asking themselves, "At what points during this portion of this task are students likely to struggle?" Teachers can then improve student performance by breaking each task into smaller chunks and building additional support into those segments of the task. Templates are an excellent way to structure tasks for students. For example, graphic organizers provide a template for helping students to analyze a topic, brainstorm vocabulary, categorize ideas, or organize their thinking in preparation for a speaking task. Storyboards support

Creative, Free Tools for Sharing Presentational Communication		
Product	Tool	URL
Audioposters	Fotobabble Glogster Thinglink	www.fotobabble.com/ www.glogster.com/edu www.thinglink.com/
Books	Bookr Shutterfly	www.pimpampum.net/bookr/ www.shutterfly.com
Brochures	MyBrochureMaker	mybrochuremaker.com/
Comics	Kerpoof ToonDoo	www.kerpoof.com/ www.toondoo.com/
Infographics	Infogr.am	https://infogr.am/app/#/home
Magazines	Flipboard Flipsnack Issuu	https://flipboard.com/ www.flipsnack.com/ issuu.com/
Newsletters	Letterpop	letterpop.com/
Oral interviews	AudioBoo SoundCloud	audioboo.fm/ https://soundcloud.com/
Stories	LittleBirdTales Photopeach Storybird	https://www.littlebirdtales.com/ www.photopeach.com/ storybird.com/
Timelines	OurStory	www.ourstory.com/
Videos (commercials, documentaries, game shows, or soap operas)	Animoto GoAnimate	animoto.com/ goanimate.com/
Websites	Weebly Wix	www.weebly.com/ www.wix.com/

students in designing, planning, sequencing, and producing multimedia projects. Story maps assist students in developing the characters, conflict, plot, and setting of stories. Templates for writing projects might contain prompts that help students outline content. They might also include models that help students express complex thoughts in simple phrases, provide sentence frames to help structure students' ideas, elicit details and examples that students can use to support their assertions, or offer word banks that help students complete the task. Checklists might include a series of steps for students to follow and can provide visual reminders of the individual components of each task, while process tracking sheets can help students self-assess their own progress and log their contributions to a group assignment as they work through various stages of each task. Once students have used such templates to help them complete the task, they need opportunities to evaluate their own work prior to turning it in (see table).

Tools such as rubrics allow students and their peers to evaluate their own practice before formal assessment takes place.

Effective rubrics share several common characteristics. Most contain an even number (4 or 6) of degrees of possible performance. This helps the teacher resist the tendency to rate everyone's performance in the average category. Only a few performance dimensions are included to enable students to focus on just a few, manageable aspects of their performance at a time. Each category represents a facet of the project that, if addressed by students, will significantly improve their performance. The descriptions of performance in each box of the rubric clearly describe what students must change in order to shift their performance to the next level. Vague terms such as "frequently," "sometimes," or "mostly" are avoided in favor of terms that are more precise and measurable (e.g., 50%, or 3 out of 5 times). Descriptions are simple and parallel one another so that the qualities of performance at each level can be easily compared. Perhaps the most important

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1. TOPIC	Have I identified a topic that my students will find intriguing?	Y	N
2. TEXTS	Have I selected several texts . . . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that will motivate students to want to communicate? • are culturally authentic and represent a variety of perspectives on the topic? • that will build my students' knowledge of the topic through different genres and media sources? • that foster cultural comparisons? • that will help students make meaningful, personal connections to target language speakers? 	Y	N
2. TASKS	Have I developed interpretive tasks that will . . . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assist students in understanding the meaning of the texts? (Comprehension) • actively engage students in making sense of the issues raised by the texts? (Content) • prepare students to express, justify, and defend their opinions about the texts? (Communication) 	Y	N
3. TALK	Have I . . . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • created at least one opportunity for students to communicate interpersonally? • designed at least one opportunity for students to present what they have learned to an authentic audience? 	Y	N
5. TOOLS	Have I provided students with sufficient templates, tools, and timely feedback to ensure their success?	Y	N

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may want to implement the Seal of Biliteracy. "Illinois does not have a state supervisor that covers foreign language education, and not all areas have a regional board of education," she says. Egnatz approached her school board about being a pilot school this year. She feels that by doing so her district can help identify considerations for other school boards and provide a model for how a school might implement the program should they decide to do so. New Jersey is following a similar path, with seven pilot districts applying their Seal's criteria for graduating seniors during the 2013–14 academic year.

Californians Together, in collaboration with Velazquez Press, provides resources and an outline of six steps for advocates in any state to follow as they work to implement a Seal of Biliteracy:

1. Clarify purposes and rationale
2. Determine the level of pathway awards to be granted
3. Define the criteria for granting the awards
4. Develop outreach strategies and an application process
5. Design the award and the award presentation process,
6. Seek endorsements and spread the word!

Their website (sealofbiliteracy.org) is often a first stop for people interested in promoting a Seal of Biliteracy.

"This is an important issue," Roberts emphasizes. "Monolingualism is the illiteracy of the 21st century. The Seal of Biliteracy can provide something tangible to represent the importance of being multilingual in today's society. It's a step in the right direction."

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must read each stanza of the poem and identify the theme portrayed and the literary devices used to do so. Just as Level 2 learners wrote prose that paralleled the reader *La Gran Aventura de Alejandro*, AP students were challenged with penning free-verse stanzas of similar themes about their own lives. The first draft focused on content. Subsequent drafts focused on using literary devices accurately to enhance the tone and lyricism of the poetic voice. Like Level 2 students, AP students worked cooperatively in Writer's Workshop to edit each other's language use and write interpersonal comments on content and literary device usage. The final draft became a storyboard with images and AP students created the same movie as Level 2 students. The rubric I created for technology skills is used for my movie projects in all language levels.

These enabling activities and summative assessment equipped learners to answer the essential questions with which my unit design began. I worked backward, step-by-step, from that desired result so that these questions framed the curriculum and guided the learning experience. The inquiry and investigation process required students to self-reflect and empowered them to express their findings in an au-

thentic manner to others. Because the questions focused on the learner as an individual, the curriculum bore special meaning, maximizing content retention and facilitating both presentational and interpersonal communication. Evaluating the project with a standards-based rubric clearly established the expectations of the assessment. Though evaluating student projects relies on professional judgment, the narrative in these rubrics makes the evaluation more credible and easier to interpret by both students and parents. In fact, Spanish teachers, no matter the location, could assess my students' understanding with the same rubrics. Ideally, these explicit standards would make the evaluation more empirical and another teacher would score the project similarly. Collecting the *Autorretrato* project in a portfolio would be useful for both students and instructors to measure academic growth over time. This communicative performance-based assessment shows that understanding is not a mere number decided by the instructor. Understanding is a story told by the learner.

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function of a rubric is its ability to provide students with targeted feedback that actually improves performance.

Brandee Mau, a German teacher at Campbell High School in Gillette, WY, asks her students to self-assess their own performance using rubrics that are aligned to the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements, as they record themselves spontaneously exchanging information and expressing opinions about their favorite books and popular movies. She reports that students willingly challenge themselves to progress to the next level of performance, and she employs several different strategies to support them in doing so.

Mau explains: "We use a conversation card that draws attention to behaviors and gambits to keep in the conversation. I also encourage constant reflection through questioning (e.g., *Why do you think this is Intermediate-Low work?*) Students set a goal detailing the steps they will take in order to progress to the next level based on what they did or did not do." Self-assessment draws students' attention to their own progress, helps them to celebrate their success, and encourages them to develop a desire to continue learning language throughout their lives.

Students need feedback from the teacher throughout the creative process. Both interpersonal and presentational assessment tasks offer many opportunities for teachers to identify patterns of error in student performance. Teachers can then provide students with on-the-spot instruction, along with just-in-time feedback and support to immediately improve performance during each task. Teachers can evaluate the quality of the oral feedback they give by checking if their feedback:

- elicits **students' evaluation** of their own performance;
- draws students' attention to **what they did well**;
- shows students how **patterns of error, misconceptions, or inefficient processes affected performance**;
- focuses on **no more than three items students have control over changing** about their performance;
- includes **specific strategies or concrete steps** that lead to **immediate progress**; and
- offers **sincere encouragement**.

The Power of Assessment

Like most tools, the value of assessment depends on our skill in using it. Some of

the most provocative forms of assessment showcase what students know and can do with the target language, help students to begin to see language as a tool for accomplishing real tasks, and support them in experiencing increasing confidence and success with their language abilities. Ensuring that assessment empowers our students in these ways may require us to shift our focus from using assessment for more mundane purposes (such as assigning grades) toward those which provide cognitively challenging, emotionally engaging, and socially satisfying opportunities to share interesting information with authentic audiences for meaningful purposes.

Such assessments have the potential to influence students' self-perceptions, shape their identities, and affect their futures. As we design compelling assessment tasks around culturally authentic tasks, carefully scaffold students' progress, and focus on providing feedback instead of just a grade, assessment will begin to empower our students, transform our instruction, and change our world in positive and powerful ways.

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