

**Virtual Item Bank (VIB):
Energizing Students through
Web-Based Tasks**

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Workshop Goal

- To become familiar with the process of creating proficiency-based test items that are based on ACTFL guidelines

Workshop Objectives

- To identify existing assessment practices in classroom testing
- To identify difficulties in creating test items (reading, listening)
- Identify and practice creating effective student-centered, contextualized, authentic test items
- To become familiar with proficiency-based item formats

Proficiency

- **What does *proficiency* mean?**
- **How do your students attain proficiency in a language?**
- **What characterizes a classroom environment in which opportunities to become proficient are maximized – with regard to:**
 - the students?
 - the teacher?
 - the materials?
 - the activities?

Your Classroom Assessment

1. How satisfied are you with your current classroom assessment?

Why?

2. What weaknesses do you see in your current classroom assessment?

3. What changes would you like to see to make it ideal?

4. What obstacles would you have to overcome to achieve the ideal assessment?

Achievement

- Mastery of the material and curriculum taught

Proficiency

- Functional ability to accomplish communication through language

Characteristics of a Proficiency-Oriented Classroom

- PAIR / GROUP WORK
- PERSONALIZATION
- COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES
- INFORMATION GAP
- SKILL INTEGRATION
- TEACHER AS FACILITATOR
- INTEGRATION OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE
- MEANINGFUL TASKS
- AUTHENTIC MATERIALS
- CONTEXTUALIZATION
- PRIMARILY TARGET LANGUAGE USE
- (From collaborative work at the Defense Language Institute.)

What is a (language learning) task?

Analysis, synthesis and evaluation of information:

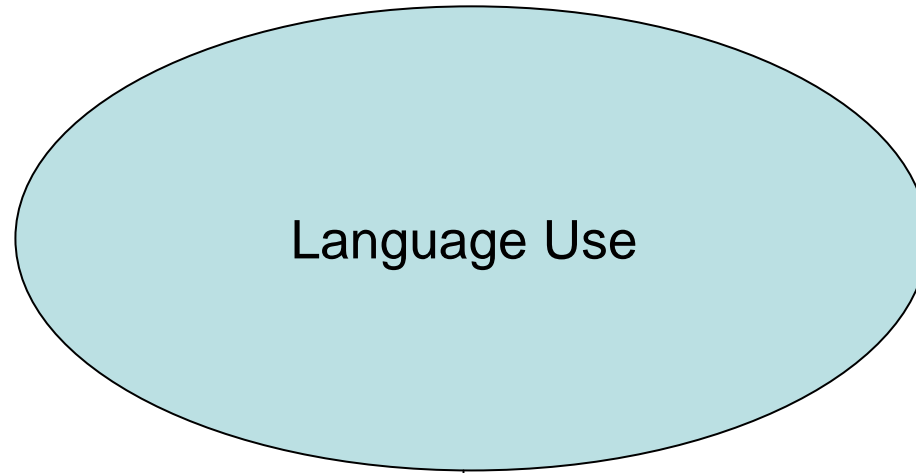
- A task is an activity in which information is manipulated through either applying certain instructions and principles to concrete situations or by analyzing, synthesizing or evaluating information.

(Bloom's Taxonomy)

Task

Procedure:

- A task always involves a procedure: a report, a summary, an analysis, a solution to a problem, etc.



Language Ability of the Language User

(Bachman & Palmer, 1996)

Test Task

- an activity that involves individuals in using language for the purpose of achieving a particular goal in a particular situation

(Bachman & Palmer, 1996)

Use of Language Tests

- to make inferences about individuals' language ability
- to make predictions about individuals' ability to use language in contexts outside the test itself

(Bachman & Palmer, 1996)

Web-Based Test Items (WBTI)

- **proficiency-based**
- Four areas (R,W,L,S)
- ACTFL Guidelines (Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior)
- **Student-centered**
- **Contextualized**
- **Task-based**
- **A variety of question formats (multiple choice, short answer, T/F, matching, classification, etc.)**

What kinds of reading objectives do you have for your students?

- guessing vocabulary from context
- skimming information
- getting the main ideas
- noting the discourse markers (however, whereas, etc.)
- predicting what the text is about using previous knowledge or the title
- ability to form hypothesis about the text based on contextual information (inferencing)
and more.....

Types of Authentic or Modified Texts*

Minimal Texts

Reading Skill – to recognize memorized elements:

- **Numbers, names, street and traffic signs**
- **Money denominations, receipts**
- **Office/shop designations**
- **Addresses**
- **Pictures with simple captions**
- **Maps**

*Adapted from Lee & Musumeci, 1988

Minimal Texts:

- Hillcrest Condos (#2)
- Children's Play (# 11)
- Street Signs (# 13)
- Hot Dog Sign (# 20)
- Door Sign (# 34)

Informational Texts

Reading Skill – to skim, scan, decode, classify:

- Ads and labels
- Factual accounts of events and people
- Instructions and directions
- Descriptions of people, places, and things
- News reports and summaries
- Introductory and concluding paragraphs
- Information transfer
- Invitations
- Technical papers

Attitudinal Texts

Reading Skill – to infer, guess, hypothesize, interpret:

- Political, social commentary (editorials)
- Analyses, apologia
- Opinion pieces
- Certain literary texts
- Biography with critical interpretation

Advanced Discourse

Reading Skill – to analyze, hypothesize, extend:

- Highly individualized argumentation
- Personalized perspectives on current events, politics, economics, culture and society, etc.
- Philosophical discourse
- Stream of consciousness and inner dialogues
- Unstated assumptions

Considerations for Establishing Proficiency-Based Tests*

- Select texts of different styles (notes, letters, essays, ads, etc.).
- Use authentic texts but manipulate the difficulty level of the questions.
- In selecting test items, think of authentic tasks.
- Limit the number of questions per text.
- Make sure the language of the items is not difficult to comprehend.
- Try to use a variety of methods for testing.

(Elena Shohamy, 1985)

Proficiency-Based Test Formats (to Accompany the Texts)

- Multiple Choice
- Short-Answer
- Listing/Classification
- Matching
- Note-Taking/Summary
- Making a diagram or a Table (transfer of information)
- Producing a Recall Protocol

The 3-Step Process of the WBTI

- (a) Gateway to Items- VBTI Templates based on ACTFL Guidelines in a variety of skills and levels showing functions, topics, text type
- (b) The Items
- (c) Pedagogical Grids show the item objectives (processes), contextualization, addressee, etc.

Template----→Item----→ Pedagogical Grid

Topic: Telling time

Reading stimulus is:	Novice level task requires learners to demonstrate that they can:			
Basic informational, instructional, directional text for a wide public audience	Recognize most symbols in a phonetic writing system (Cyrillic, hangul, kana, etc.)	Recognize isolated words and expressions	Pick out main ideas and key words in familiar material	Comprehend recombined text using familiar, memorized material
•signs	Authentic materials to be read aloud.	Classified ads, signs, and bulletin board postings containing time expressions.		
•ads		Ads in yellow pages.		
•phone books, yellow pages		Restaurant time schedules.		
•menus		Time expressions or time expressed in schedules and timetables. Time expressions in short memos or notes.		
•schedules, timetables				

Novice Level Reading

- Novice level template (money,#)
- Example item (Yellow Pages Ads)
- Example item (Breakfast)
- Example item (Ramada Express)
- Novice level template (geography)
- Example item
- Novice level template (clothing)
- Example item

WBTI Pedagogical Grid

- ACTFL Topics
- Item Types
- Contextualization (meaningful task)
- Cognitive Processes of items
- [Example grid \(novice reading\)](#)

Skill: Reading**Novice**

# & Title	Assessment Level	Related ACTFL Topics	Text Type	Task (Contextualization)	Item Format	Item Objectives (Processes)
NR#1- Yellow Pages	Novice Mid	Basic objects, numbers, money, telling time	Yellow Pages Ads on the Web Brief texts of a formulaic nature	Yes	1-short answer 2-T/F & short answer 3,4,5,6 - MC	1-6 – Scanning for specific information
NR#2 – Hillcrest Condos	Novice Mid	Numbers, money, telling time, dates	Advertisement on the Web. Brief texts of a formulaic nature	Yes	1,2- MC 3 – short answer	1,2- Scanning for specific information 3- Making inferences

Advanced & Superior Reading

- [Advanced Template](#)
- [Example Item](#)
- [Superior Template](#) (abstract topics)
- [Example Item](#)

Writing Items at Different Levels

- Novice template
- Example
- Intermediate template
- Example



Listening is important

- First introduction to language
- Most used of all language skills
- Provides encouragement
- Students' confidence and ability to interact are motivated

Overview of Difference

Reading

- **Development of ideas as you read**
- **More structured**
- **Generally societal topics**

Listening

- **Ideas expressed in a linear form**
- **More personal**
- **Happens in real time**

Overview of Differences

Reading

- **One author**
- **Text is visual**

Listening

- **Multiple speakers**
- **Text is auditory**

What equipment to use?

- **Marantz PMD670 Professional Solid-State Recorder**



Suitable Texts (Buck, 2001)

Pre-recorded

- Broadcasting companies
- The internet
- Teaching materials

Recording off-air (radio stations, TV)

Recording live target-language use

- Semi-scripted texts
- Impromptu (unscripted texts) recording
- -monologues, interactive texts (dialogues, interviews) , academic texts

Some Websites from ESL

- Dave Sperling's ESL Café
(<http://eslcafe.com/>)
- Purdue OWL
(<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/esl/index.html>)
- Randall's ESL Cyber-Listening Lab
(<http://esl-lab.com>)

Government-related initiatives

- GLOSS by DLI (materials and tasks at a variety of ILR levels)

www.lingnet.org

- Lang Net (need a password from the National Foreign Language Center)
-located at the University of Maryland

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